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D E F E N C E

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OF THE
Dissertation or Inquiry
Concerning the

G O S P E L

According to

MATTHEW.

Occasioned by the

Bishop of LONDON'S
Third Pastoral Letter.

I N

Answer to a Tract intituled, *A Vin-*
dication of the said Gospel. By Mr. TWELLS,
Vicar of St. Mary's in Marlborough.

W I T H

Some further Reflections on the said PASTORAL LETTER.

*Pius Labor, sed periculosa Presumptio judicare de
cæteris, ipsum ab omnibus judicandum, Senis mu-
tare Linguam, & canescentem jam Mundum, ad
Initia retrahere Parvulorum.*

HIERON. Pref. in Evang. ad Damas.

L O N D O N:

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DEFENCE

OF THE

Dissertation for Inquiry

Concerning the

COSPOL

According to

WANTHEW

Of London by the

Bishop of London

Third Edition

IN

Answer to a Pamphlet, &c.

Author of the last Essay, by Mr. T. W.

First of Series, in Manuscript

Vol. II.

Some further Reflections on the last Part

FOR A SECOND

Part of the Series, &c.

Author of the last Essay, &c.

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A
D E F E N C E
O F T H E

Dissertation or Inquiry

Concerning the

G O S P E L

According to

MATTHEW.



WHEN the third Pastoral Letter came forth (last Year) with the venerable Title of *Bishop of London* prefix'd to it, promising in its first Pages, to give us a *clear View of the Evidences, both of the Truth and Authority of the Writings of the N. T.* great was the Expectation of the common Fry of *Vicars* and *Curates* about Town, and even of some indifferently dispos'd learned Men, — That now surely the *Bishop* having all the Advantages of Learning, as well of the present as of former Ages, and seeing also thro' their Failings

and Mistakes ; that the *Bishop* I say had now produc'd such plain Evidence for the Truth and Authority of those sacred Writings, as should not only put to silence, all Objections of *Infidels*, but fix the wavering *Christian* also in a steady Belief, of every single Book in them, ~~some~~ of which had been render'd precarious, and their Authority suspected by some in all Ages.

But after this *Letter* had been some Time in Hand, and consider'd even by those, who had received it with the most favourable Opinion, some began to own it a hasty inconsiderate Work, which could do no Good, but possibly much Hurt to reveal'd Religion ; this his Friends talk'd freely, as the best Apology they thought could be made for him. Others conceiv'd it calculated for the Populace, or ruder Sort of People only, who should take all upon Credit, and not for his whole Diocese, as the Letter is formally directed ; they would not believe the *Bishop* could ever intend, such a Piece, for the knowing and more judicious Part of his Diocese ; nevertheless blaming him for laying down *Positions*, he had fell infinitely short of making good, and which must appear so, to the meanest Capacities — whilst the most seem'd persuaded, that this same *third Letter*, was the Performance of some meaner Hand, whom his Lordship, having his Thoughts otherwise engaged, had trusted to draw up for him, and had afterwards dignify'd it with his Title ; and to speak the Truth in this Light it was (with all due Deference to my *Lord of London*) the *Dissertation Writer* (I believe) took it, when he entered into the *Inquiry of St. Matthew's Gospel*.

Which *Inquiry* seems intended, not so much in Opposition to the said *Letter*, or direct Answer to it, as it was to demonstrate in a single Instance,
taken

taken from the *Gospels*, the first that offer'd. That to establish the *Canon of the N. T.* against the Cavils of *Infidels*, to the Satisfaction of inquisitive but sincere *Christians*, was not a Task so easy, as the Author's slight Manner of treating the Subject bore before it.

The whole Discourse manifestly tends that Way, as also to remind the Author of some Difficulties, which remain'd to be solv'd, and to advise and supplicate a new Edition of the said *Letter*, for quieting the Minds of some People, more especially with respect to the first *Gospel*, which stands as it were the *Basis* of the whole *Gospel-History*, and which Difficulties the Author of the *Dissertation* conceiv'd, it was equally the *Bishop's incumbent Duty* to resolve, as it was at first to publish such his *Pastoral Letter*.

For 'twas said to what Purpose does the *Bishop* write *Pastoral Letters*, or suffer 'em. to come out in his Name, if those *Letters* are not to be turn'd over, and consider'd again and again by those, to whom they are more immediately directed, and for whose Instructions they are profess'd to be wrote, and consequently to whom farther Instructions are due, if Reason requires.

Therefore the *Country Vicar*, who hath taken upon him the Vindication rather of the *Bishop*, than *St. Matthew's Gospel*, and to answer to Points propos'd to the *Bishop* only. This *Vicar* I say hath been guilty of a much greater Presumption towards the People of the *Bishop's Diocese*, in whose Behalf those Points were stirr'd, by thrusting in his Answer unrequir'd, and which could give no Satisfaction in room of the *Bishop*; than any Thing he reprehends in the *Inquirer*, who being himself under the *Bishop's pastoral Care*, had an immediate Right to give his Thoughts on the *Bishop's Letter*, in as public a Manner as it

was wrote, and further to propose to him, what religious Doubts were thought proper, as also to be therein resolv'd, by the *Bishop*, and by him only, and to resent the *Bishop's* loose Way of treating the Holy Scriptures, before *Infidels* and *Heretics*. To justify which Conduct of the *Inquirer* towards his *Pastor*, many Examples might be brought from History.

Nor will it avail, what the *Vindicator* is pleas'd to advance, in excuse of the *Bishop's* Undertaking, p. 2. "That it was not design'd in Defence of the *Canon of the N. T.* against the Cavils either of *Infidels* or *Heretics* in general:" When the contrary is apparent even from the *Vindicator's* own shewing, but more especially from the *Pastoral Letter* itself, which puts the Controversy between *Infidels* and *Christians* upon this very Footing, viz. " * That if the Writings of the *N. T.* be not authentic (i. e. either the Writings not genuine, or the Authority not divine) the *Infidel Scheme* is well founded; but on the other hand, if they be authentic in both those Respects, *Christianity* (says he) stands unshaken, and all Pretences, (of *Infidels*) either that it is not well founded, or that it is no more than mere Morality, must fall to the Ground." Who will say then, that the *Bishop's* laudable Design, was not to defend the Canon of the *N. T.* against *Infidels*, and to subvert their *Scheme*, when he declares it in so many Words, and directs all his Artillery against them? Besides the Absurdity, every one sees imply'd, in a solemn Undertaking of the Defence of Holy Scripture against those, who have no Exceptions at all to it.

The *Inquirer* aiming solely at Truth, had no regard either to the Author of the *Letter*, or the *Letter*

Letter itself farther, than as by its fallacious Reasonings on the one Side, and its spurious Evidence on the other, it obstructed his Passage to it. In his full Pursuit after *Truth*, he staid not to pay Compliments by the Way, but treated the Writer on that Level he had put himself, by his own Productions; in which he is highly excusable, since the Commonwealth of Learning owns no Titles, but such only as emerge out of distinguish'd Merit, she esteems all Men by their Learning only, neither can there be any thing more ridiculous, than to see sometimes an Author of dull Fame, characterize, and affix his venerable Title to, a mean and incompetent Work.

The *Vindicator* having by his Patron's Direction (for 'tis very well known under whose Instruction he wrote) given up all Design of the *Bishop* to instruct, either the *Unbelievers*, or *mistaken Believers* of his *Diocese*, proceeds to justify the *Bishop* against the *Inquirer*, as having made good all he undertook in his last *Pastoral Letter*. In order to which having p. 4. repeated the *Bishop's* two Positions, viz. " 1st, That the four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus." And, " 2dly, That they have been faithfully transmitted to *Christians* of succeeding Ages."

The *Vindicator* I say having repeated these Positions, he again just as the *Bishop* before him, to the End to amuse and withdraw the Reader's Attention from his expected Proof of them, offers first to enter into the Characters, or Qualifications of the reputed Authors of the said Gospels. But waving again that Point, p. 5. he passes into an Observation, or rather Affirmation of the *Bishop*, viz. " That the real Existence
" of

“ of *Jesus of Nazareth* at the Time the *Gospel*
 “ speaks of, and his chusing several Persons to
 “ be his Disciples, are Facts, which the greatest
 “ *Enemies to Christianity* never deny’d.” And
 further, “ That the *Gospel* affirms of these Dis-
 “ ciples in general, which also has never been
 “ deny’d, that they left their several Callings
 “ and Occupations, to the End they might be
 “ wholly at Liberty, to attend *Jesus* and receive
 “ his Instructions.” So that here we have been
 led to one Point after another purely for the
 staving off the Proof of the *first Position*, the
 Facts of which the *Vindicator* knew he was not
 able to make good.

At the same Time, I profess, I have consulted
 all the *Heathen Authors* I can think of, and can-
 not find one, that takes the least Notice of such
 a Person as *Jesus*, under the Description the *Bi-*
shop and his *Vindicator* put him. The *Inquirer*
 hath (I think) admitted, there is an *Heathen Au-*
thor or two in the second Century, which bare-
 ly mention the Name of *Christ*; from whence
 may be concluded, that a Person under the Name
 of *Jesus Christ* really existed, but not that what is
 wrote of him in the *Gospels* is true. These Au-
 thors say not a Word of “ one *Jesus of Naza-*
 “ *reth*, who chose several Disciples, and that
 “ these left their Callings and Occupations pure-
 “ ly to attend and be instructed by him.” They
 have not a Word of any such Matter, and of
 this I am pretty confident. With what Face then
 doth the *Vindicator* aver, p. 5. “ That these are
 “ such unquestionable Facts, as to need no fur-
 “ ther Proof.” And thence infer of his own
 Head, p. 6. “ That two of these (self denying)
 “ Disciples, being Writers of *Gospels*, were well
 “ qualify’d to bear Witness of the Things that were
 “ done and spoken by their Master.” Whereas
 there

there is not the least Evidence of any of these Things, except from the *Gospels* themselves.

As to the other two *Evangelists* the *Vindicator* does not pretend, p. *ibid.* that they were of the Number of those, “who left their great Callings” and Occupations to follow *Jesus*, but to follow “his Apostles *Peter* and *Paul*,” but this is ‘the very Thing he had to prove, viz. that they were the Followers of those *Apostles*, since all the *primitive Converts* who rejected their *Gospels*, and many learned *Moderns* had other Thoughts.

The *Vindicator* further adds, p. 7. from * *Eusebius* a crafty old *Arian* of no Trust nor Judgment, and who took his Report from he knew not who; † ‘Tis reported (he says) that *St. John* saw the other three *Gospels* and approv’d them. What Pity it is Men should profane the sacred Writings with such Evidence. Is the *Vindicator* sure the *Gospels* we now have, are the very same which *St. John* saw? If so, and he is not diffident of their *original Divinity*, why does he bring this old *Arch-Heretic* to vouch, they received their Sanction from *St. John*? Can any Thing appear more vain, than to make *St. John* approve of Books dictated by the Holy Spirit, and in his Name publish’d to the World? And yet according to the same Father, he did not so approve of them neither, but that he wish’d they had been better wrote, he and the *Asian Bishops* with him, found such Faults (it seems) in those three *Gospels*, that *St. John* what through those *Bishops* Intreaties, and his own Conscioufness of their Defects, was at length obliged to bless the World, with another more

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correct

* See the Character of this wicked Father who prevaricated with God and Man, at the Council of *Nice*, in *Scaliger’s Elench. Trihær.* c. 29. and in his *Chronicon*, p. 8. in *Father Maimburg’s Hist. of Arianism*, tom. i. l. 1. and *Valesius* and *Le Clerc’s* Life of him. † *E. H.* l. 3. c. 24.

correct and compleat *Gospel*, and thus Father *Eusebius* effectually undoes his own foolish Testimony.

But I had almost forgot to observe, that the * *Bishop* and his † *Vindicator* both, labour to have it further admitted ; that the *Enemies of Christianity* in or near *Jesus's* Time, not only knew there was such a Person as *Jesus*, who really existed in *Judæa*, and suffer'd Death on the Cross at the Time mentioned in the Gospels, but that they were also apprised of several Facts of his related in those Gospels, “ for which Christians “ appeal'd to the Accounts transmitted to *Rome* “ by the *Roman* Governors. ” Therefore argue they — “ the Heathens must needs have been “ perswaded of the Truth of those Facts ; other- “ wise whilst Tradition concerning the Person “ of *Jesus* was fresh, they would have convicted “ the evangelical Historians of Falshood, wanting “ no Inclination so to do.”

But now supposing the learned *Enemies of Christianity* never deny'd those *Facts*, as we know certainly they did, and that their Writings have been for that Reason *† destroy'd, yet I am afraid, the Non-conversion of those few learned *Heathens*, upon their suppos'd immediate Intelligence of those *Facts* ; will be thought a stronger Proof for their Disbelief of them, than their Silence, with respect to them, can be for their Belief ; which (says the Adversary) arose more likely from an utter Contempt, and Neglect, of them, agreeable to their known Treatment of *Christians* in those

* *Past. Lett.* p. 17. † *Vindicat.* p. 9. — 24. *† *Vid.* *Constant. Epistle* apud *Socrat.* E. H. l. 1. c. 9. in which that Emperor orders all Books of Heretics to be destroy'd (as those of *Porphyry* had been before) on Pain of Death. *Cave* says *Porphyry's* 15 Books against Christianity were destroy'd by Decree of *Theodosius*. *Hist. Liter. Secul. Novat.* sub. fin.

those Days, than from any Conviction of their Truth. Had they been so conscious of the Truth of the *Gospel-History* in general, as to be able to deny no part of it, as these Gentlemen contend, what should hinder, that they did not forthwith embrace Christianity? Nay had they believ'd the *Bishop's* first Position, they had been *ipso facto Christians*, for the *Christians* themselves believ'd no more, and many Times not so much.

There can be nothing more unfair, and unnatural, than to conclude merely from the Silence of heathen Authors, that the Christian Miracles were all true; for first we must suppose those Authors to have known and believ'd them; and yet out of Envy to the divine Author, would not record them in their Histories, which is a most injurious Reflection.

Had those grave Writers *Tacitus*, *Suetonius* or *Pliny*, ever heard of the *Miracles*, and *Prodigies* related in the *Gospels*, and been perswaded of the Truth of them, they would never have passed them over in Silence, and at the same Time wickedly condemn'd the Religion of *Christians*, as the most execrable Superstition. They were all three addicted to the Relation of *Prodigies* and *Miracles*. And *Tacitus* and *Suetonius* in particular would certainly have mentioned, as well those wrought by *Jesus* in *Judæa*, as those by *Vespasian* at *Alexandria*, had they come to them equally attested.

Therefore I confess, I am rather inclin'd to believe, for the Honour of Christianity, that the learned Heathens, in or near *Jesus's* Time, knew little or nothing certain concerning him, and that their strong Prejudices shewn against him arose from false Rumours, and not from a regular Transmission of Facts truly stated to *Rome*, as *Justin M.* and *Tertullian* have without any pro-

bable Ground, and to the great Scandal of our Religion asserted.

For besides that if any such Facts had been duly transmitted, they must needs have instill'd more honourable Notions of *Jesus* and his new Religion, than we find obtain'd among the more judicious Part of Mankind in those Days, so 'tis certain, no one ever saw any public Acts or Registries of that Sort, no not after the Emperors became Christian, which is a sure Proof there never were any such in Truth transmitted

As no such Acts then ('tis likely) were ever transmitted, so the *Inquirer* had said, " That what we have now either of *Jew* or *Heathen*, relating to *Jesus's* Person, are either known Forgeries, or they are found only in the Books of the *Christian Priests* and Fathers, who (being Adversaries) cite those Authors *as they please*." The *Vindicator* seems a little concern'd at these last Words as implying " that the Christian Priests were capable of citing, what their Adversaries never wrote," p. 11. But will he then pretend their Hands were clean in that Respect, and that no such Villany was ever practis'd among them? when 'tis so well known to the learned World, that there is scarce a profane History but which hath suffer'd by them; and that the Scriptures themselves have not escap'd them. Nay, they have not spar'd one * another's Writings, the *Moderns* having destroy'd or else corrected the *Antients*, not to mention the infinite *Forgeries*, with which *Christianity* was attended in its very Infancy,

* Vid. *Hieron.* adv. *Vigilantium* Op. tom. 2. p. 312, 313. where that Father owns himself guilty of adding to and retrenching from the Works of *Origen*, and accuses St. *Hilary*, *Eusebius Vercellensis* and several others of the like Practices, and is again accus'd by *Ruffinus*. Vid. *Sandii* E. H. de *Origine*, p. 33. where you will find many Examples of this Kind.

cy, and as ecclesiastical History informs us, was carry'd on in the first Ages, and is still by the same Means (as we have a sad Instance now before us) endeavour'd to be supported.

As to the *known Forgeries* hinted at above by the *Inquirer*, the *Vindicator* will have these to respect principally, the Testimonies in *Josephus*, which were not quite forgot; but I assure him they regarded more immediately the *Acts of Pilate*, which the *Bishop* had intimated for authentic, in Proof that *Jesus* was well known to the *Gentile World*. Which *Acts* (still extant) were certainly forg'd, for the sake of bringing public Attestation to the *Christian Religion*, tho' otherwise of great Antiquity, *Justin M.* having knavishly appeal'd to them for the Truth of the *Gospel History*, about the Middle of the second Age, and *Tertullian* after him in the Beginning of the third, in their several *Apologies for Christianity*. Notable *Apologies* pretended to have been delivered to *Emperors*, founded upon Forgery, and indited by *Heretics*, and * *Apostates*.

As to the pretended Testimonies, found at this Day in *Josephus*, whoever has a mind to be satisfy'd, of another *Christian Forgery*, let him consult *Mr. Du Pin's Ecclesiastical History of the first Century*; who has placed this Matter in a fair Light, and whose Arguments, too many to be in-

* *Justin M.* as he is generally esteem'd the most illiterate of all the Fathers, so also the first *Apostate* of note among the Gentiles. This Man having a little smattering in *Philosophy*, was so captivated therewith, that he spent all his Days in adjusting *Christianity* to it, in which he succeeded so well, as to lay the Foundation of all those fierce Divisions, which have rag'd ever since, with infinite Slaughter and Devastation among *Christians*, relating to *Jesus's Divinity and Incarnation*. *Tertullian* was another *Apostate*, and so consider'd by Mother-Church, and tho' drench'd with her furious Spirit, yet for ought appears dyed unpardoned, under her Sentence of Excommunication. Anonym.

inserted here, will evince even to a Demonstration, that *Josephus* could never be the Author of those Testimonies. — But while we are thus soberly contending upon these Trifles, can any Thing be more unbecoming, than once to imagine, that *true Religion* is by the Providence of God, left to subsist on, or indeed have any Thing to do with, any such Evidence.

Well but as trifling, absurd, and illusory, as every Bit of it is, 'tis all you are like to have, for the *great Facts* laid down in the *Bishop's first Position*; for the *Vindicator* insisting, that the learned *Enemies of Christianity*, in or near our Saviour's Time, did or might know those *Facts*, "as well from the Preachings of the *Apostles*, "as from Accounts transmitted by the *Roman Governors to Rome*, and yet not having refuted them, p. 14. in Part or in Whole, the Truth and Faithfulness of the Gospel History receives "abundant Confirmation from their Silence". And further, p. 24. "The *Bishop* having made "it appear, that the suppos'd Evangelists had "a sufficient Knowledge also of their Subject, "and that their Characters in Point of Integrity "are unquestionable, it follows that they could "neither be impos'd on Themselves, nor impose "on Others, the Consequence of which is", *That the four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.* And thus the *Vindicator* hath, he thinks, very dextrously prov'd, that the *Bishop* hath made good the *Facts* contain'd in his *first Position*; tho' 'tis certain neither *himself*, nor the *Bishop*, have said one Word to them; and what still renders all Pretence of this Nature the more ridiculous before *Infidels* is, that neither of them hitherto, have given their Readers any the least Satisfaction, that the reput-

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ed Authors of the four Gospels, whose Characters they have been so long upholding, were indeed the *true* Ones.

But this the *Vindicator* pretends, p. *ibid.* "is
 " a point not controverted by the *Bishop's* Ad-
 " versary, but with Respect to the first of the
 " four Gospels only." Tho' a little after, as if
 conscious that the *Inquirer* had not omitted to
 touch upon this Point also, with Respect to the
 other *Gospels*; the *Vindicator* urges the Testimony
 of the *Fathers*, with this Preamble, p. 25.
 " *Good Sense* (says he) and the Reason of Things
 " require, that we determine our Assent (in Re-
 " lation to Authors) from the most prevailing
 " Tradition, of the Times next following those
 " Books, that are the Subject of our Inquiry."
 Very true, but he forgets that the first Evidence
 he has, for ascertaining any Author of the Books
 of the *N. T.* is Father *Irenæus*, a weak credu-
 lous Man, who very likely had the Tradition
 from old *Papias*, whose genuine Writings too
 are for the most Part lost, and who did not
 flourish, 'till above an Age after the Times, most
 of the *Gospels* are pretended to have been com-
 pos'd; when according to the same Father's own
 shewing, *Heresies* were so multiply'd, and *Gospels*
 with them (every Heresy having its own Gospel)
 that it required no less, than a divine Penetration
 to distinguish, between the Works of *Heresies*,
 and those of inspired Authors, compil'd an whole
 Age before. Whereas it does not appear, that
 any great Number of *primitive Christians*, who
 existed in, and next following the Times of the
New Testament Writings, receiv'd the three Gos-
 pels of *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*, (of *Matthew* I
 shall speak hereafter.) On the contrary, all the
Jewish Christians, i. e. all *Jesus's* own Converts
 rejected them, and every Sect of *Gentile Christi-*

ans too, of whom we have any Account by * Name, the *Marcionites* with respect to *Luke's* Gospel (very much interpolated) and the *Gnostics* or *Platonie* Heretics with respect to *John's* only excepted. The unanimous Testimony of all which *primitive Christians* (tho' commonly styl'd *Heretics*) some will think, is much to be preferr'd, to the uncertain Tradition of a few Party-fathers, interested in the Case, who came long after them; and who founded their Opinions, either upon vagrant Reports, or their own bold Conjectures (as Father † *Simon* on this Head very well observes) and not on any *antient Acts* as is most apparent in ecclesiastical History. Besides that,

The Fathers Tradition, concerning inspir'd Books, is the less to be regarded, as they certainly took it in their Heads, to new model the *Christian Religion*, after *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and consequently would be very apt to prefer those Books, which were most for their modelling Purpose.

For as our *Bishop* truly observes, § “ The whole
 “ Scheme of *Christianity* was not fully open'd to
 “ the World by *Christ* himself immediately, but
 “ many Things were left by him to be deliver'd
 “ or explain'd by his *Apostles*. ” So *Divines* not
 only admit but contend, “ That many Things
 “ again were left by the *Apostles*. to be explain'd
 “ by those that should come after, even by their
 “ Suc-

* *Heretics* were so numerous in the first and second Ages, that all the *primitive Christians* seem to be included under one Denomination of *Heresy* or other. *Christianity* having been always upon a *Change*, the *Antients* were ever Heterodox to the *Moderns*, the former Age constantly to the latter; so that it may be justly said, upon the Foot of ecclesiastical History, that all the *primitive Christians*, *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*, rejected the three last Gospels, because we know of no one Sect or Party, but those mentioned, who did not. Anonym. † Crit. Hist. New Test. part i. ch. 10. § Past. Letter, p. 18.

“ Successors in Office, ” of which they have made no little Use. He that knows not this, must never have look'd into *Ecclesiastical History*, or heard of *Councils*, or *Creed-making*, which if the *Clergy* had their Liberty would hold on to the End of the World; *Christianity* with their good Will, should be always forming, never form'd: I blush therefore for the *Vindicator's* Assurance in denying, p. 27. “ That the Fathers have been “ the Modellers of the Christian Religion; ” or what is much the same, “ of the fundamental “ Articles relating to it. ”

I should proceed now to the short Defence I intend to make, of the *Dissertation on St. Matthew's Gospel*, but before I enter upon that Subject, it may not be improper to observe a little, upon the Nature of the *Bishop's* Evidence in general, which he makes use of against *Infidels*, for Proof of the * “ Sacred Writings of the N. T. the great “ Charter of *Christians*, upon the Validity of “ which their Faith and their Hope are built. ” It consists I would observe of three Kinds.

First, Of that taken out of those *Writings* themselves, as v. g. he brings Texts out of *Mark*, to vouch for *Matthew*; out of *Luke* again, for *Mark* and *Matthew*; and lastly out of *John* for all three; (that is) he appeals for the Truth of the *Gospel History*, to the *History of the Gospel*; not I mean to its own internal divine Characters, which had been proper; but he supposes first, that such and such were the Authors, and then calls 'em to witness for one another.

His *second Species* of Evidence is altogether external, and is taken both from *Friends* and *Foes*. But the Fault found first with his *Friends* (the primitive Fathers) is, That they were Men of no secular Learning, Veracity, or Judgment, as appears

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* *Past. Lett.* p. 7.

pears evidently from their Works, absurd in their Relations, and often contradictory, both to themselves and others; whose Testimony is founded on no Acts, but oral Tradition only, *i. e.* mere idle Tales, or their own Inventions: And then particularly as to two of these, even *Irenæus* and *Tertullian*, whom the *Bishop* makes most Use of, the latter 'tis known became an Apostate, was excommunicated, and actually died without the Pale of the Church, for which Reason his Testimony hath been rejected by other * *Fathers*, particularly *St. Cyprian* and *Jerom*, as not fit to be used in the *Catholic Cause*, and the former's genuine Works are not extant: So that the *Bishop's* next Resort on this Head to give any Satisfaction, must be to the avow'd *Enemies of Christianity*, from whom he has to extort all the Concessions he can, in Favour of those Facts he promis'd to make good.

But alas the *Enemies of Christianity* (the Heathen Enemies) are all silent in the Grave; their Writings, as the *Inquirer* hath pertinently observ'd, are all destroy'd, and have been so for above 1400 Years past, and that (say *Infidels*) by those very Men, who are absurd enough now, to require it should be taken for granted, they deny'd none of those Facts, on which *Christianity* is chiefly founded, though those *Enemies* wrote against *Christianity*, and died in the *Pagan Faith*. Besides that the *Bishop* hath neglected, or wanted Subject to apply his Ethnic Evidence as he ought.

For whereas he should have made it extend if he could, to all, or at least some of those particular Facts laid down in his first Position, (to wit) to *Jesus's* miraculous Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, his Lordship makes his *Enemies* speak only (and that very precariously) to the single

* Vid. *Reeve's* preliminary Discourse to *Tertullian's* Apologetic. p. 149.

gle Fact, that such a *Person* as *Jesus* really existed, without appropriating to such *Person* any one of those Wonders mention'd in the said *Position*, all which he had oblig'd himself to speak to, and which were indeed the very Matter he had in Hand; there having been many Persons, no doubt, of the Name of *Jesus*, but none for ought appears by any his Lordship's Proofs, to whom those *Acts* can be certainly apply'd. Nevertheless on this scanty Proof alone, that such a *Person* as one *Jesus* existed, and was crucify'd; the *Bishop* first, and his *Vindicator* after him, lay mighty Stress, exalting themselves very much over *Infidels*, whilst *Infidels* (I am apt to think) on the other Hand, lament for the deeply rooted Bigotry and Prejudices of some Men, who can build *their Faith* and *their Hope* upon such vain Foundations.

I come now to his Lordship's third and last Species of Evidence, which (I am sorry to say) is taken from some spurious Pieces,* and exploded Fragments pretended of *primitive Fathers*, such as those out of * *Clemens Rom. 2 Epistle to the Corinthians* replete with *Heresy*, *The Acts of Pilate* aforementioned, an impious and ridiculous Forgery, and some † *Anti-Apostolic* Fragments under the Name of *Polycarp*, never heard of before the sixth Century; but in that ignorant, superstitious, and most corrupt Age, trump'd up by one *Victor Capuanus*, an Author (says our present excellent || *Archbishop* with respect to these very Fragments) of no Judgment nor worthy the least Credit; and as my *Lord of London* could not but be apprised of the same Thing, with his Grace

C 2 of

* Quoted *Past. Lett.* p. 15. but always look'd upon as spurious by the Antients, and never cited by them. *Euseb. E. H.* l. iii. c. 38. Besides that it hath been lost for several Hundred Years, and but lately and very imperfectly recover'd.

† Ibid. p. 15. || Prelim. Disc. to his Engl. Transl. of Apost. Fathers, p. 30.

of Canterbury; 'tis not easy to conceive, what could induce him to impose such Evidence on the numerous People of his Diocese, especially in a Cause so good. *A Cause surely that needs no Imposture to support it.*

Thus you have fairly laid before you, the several Species of Evidence the Bishop hath thought fit to offer, in Proof of the Gospel History: And I appeal to the common Understanding of Mankind, whether it is reasonable to believe, that God should ever give Men a Revelation, that in after Ages should stand in need of such Evidence. But let us see what the *Vindicator* hath to urge in Justification of his Lordship's Conduct on the Head of Evidence.

And first, being aware his Lordship hath been very incorrect in that Respect, he denies, p. 2. "his Lordship had any Design to defend the Canon " of the *New Testament* against any particular Infidel, much less against the whole Body of them;" but his Design 'tis pretended was, "to guard " his Diocese against the Delusions of a certain " Tract, which denied the Scriptures to be a " divine Rule of Faith and Manners," which Tract, that I can find, was never heard of. The Bishop indeed points in his * Margin to a Tract, intitled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, the venerable and most learned Author of which, he with all his *Christian Charity* could not forbear exposing to his vulgar Readers, as a Patron of Infidelity, tho' that Tract is the farthest off any such Thing in the World, or of denying the Scriptures to be a divine Rule of Faith and Manners: Well, but the Bishop's Design it seems was, against the Infidel Author of such Tract, and not against any particular Infidel; and next the *Vindicator* pretends, "the Bishop hath sufficiently " guarded

* Past. Lett. p. 6.

“ guarded his Diocese against such Delusions, by
 “ laying before them the principal Evidences
 “ upon which it is reasonable to believe the en-
 “ tire Body of the N. T. Writings as of divine
 “ Truth and Certainty.” But what those *prin-*
cipal Evidences are, is already shewn; God forbid
 they should be the only Evidences *Christians* have,
 on which to build *their Faith and their Hope*; was
 this the Case, *Christians* wou’d be indeed of *all*
others the most miserable; and *Christianity* would
 be so far from being *immoveably fix’d*, that it
 would be liable to be overturn’d with the *Breath*
 of every Infidel.

I am now come to examine and see, how well
 the *Vicar* hath done the Office of the *Bishop*, in
 answering for him the Objections made, more
 particularly to the Gospel of *Matthew*: In order
 to which,

’Tis fit to take Notice, that tho’ this Man sees,
 and admits, those Objections generally to be no
 other, than old Cavils of *Heretics* reviv’d; which
 is freely acknowledged on the Part of the *Inqui-*
rer, only ’tis apprehended they stand in need of
 a satisfactory Answer; yet he could not refrain,
 from using the *Inquirer* in such a Manner, as if
 he was indeed the first Inventor or Broacher of
 them; his Pen is dipp’d in Vinegar, and Gall;
false, ignorant, Deist, Infidel, avow’d Infidel, with
 a great many scandalous Insinuations besides, are
 continually thrown out on the *anonymous* Author,
 for no other Reason as appears, than for entring
 too strictly into an Inquiry, the Neglect of which
 had been highly criminal, it being every *Christian*
Man’s Duty, and highest Concern, to use all
 his Endeavours, to get the best Evidence he
 can, for the Truth and Authority of the sacred
 Books: Therefore to this Gentleman’s Compli-
 ments, we shall return no other Answer, than
 that

that we see indeed, and acknowledge a Portion of the *B* — 's Spirit to be descended on him.

Is it that these Men scorn to yield to those *Duties*, they impose on the rest of Mankind? Or is it that they believe their Master to have been really in earnest, when he said, *He came not to send Peace but a Sword upon the Earth?* as indeed they have pretty well verifi'd that Declaration, ever since it was first made. But to this it is said, *and only said*; that the said Author hath been too familiar with my *Lord of London*. A Crime I confess very heinous, and for which I am perswaded he is as ready to ask Pardon, as his Lordship is to forgive.

In the mean Time, if our Author had not blab'd out his own Title, he might have gone off with the Air of some great Dignitary in a Church *unreform'd*; having all the Arrogance, Pride, and Malice, incident for the most Part, to that Set of Men, as often as they are attack'd, with innocent Inquiries, and Researches, into the Truth and Foundation, of the Religion they teach us: Though in this very learned and inquisitive Age, wherein the Laity may pretend, to be on a Level with the Clergy, in all Kinds of polite Literature, and their Superiors in most; one would think they might learn to behave with more Moderation. But to do our Author Justice with those of his Profession, whatever becomes of his own Character, he will make no Concessions to the Disadvantage of Orthodoxy, he will defend every adopted Point to the last, how scandalous and exploded soever; this they had to expect from him, when he had the Confidence to revive the old Controversy, upon that expiring Text of *1 John v. 7.* in Opposition to the Critics, of the greatest and brightest Men of the present Age, who foresee not without Con-

cern,

cern, that such like Doctrines are as so many Millstones, fasten'd about the Neck of reveal'd Religion ; which if not timely remov'd, will one Day weigh it down into the bottomless Gulph. But to the Point I have in Hand, in Relation to *Matthew's Gospel*.

In speaking to which I propose, not so much to support the Arguments of *Heretics* or *Infidels* urg'd pertinaciously to overthrow it ; as to shew rather, how far the *Vindicator* (tho' so well assisted) hath come short in giving Satisfaction concerning them, to sceptical and inquisitive *Christians*.

This being my Point, far be it from me, to raise any new Objections to the said *Gospel* ; I shall confine myself to those already made, or rather reviv'd in the *Inquiry*, and to which the *Vindicator* hath undertaken to answer ; but how well he hath acquitted himself in that Respect, shall be my Business to examine, in the Order he himself hath plac'd them.

The *Inquirer* having in the Beginning of his *Dissertation*, mention'd some Doubt among *Heretics*, “ with Regard to the present Title to *Matthew's Gospel*, of which there is no History, “ when or by whom it became affix'd ; but “ chiefly with regard to the many different Titles, or Names it bore in the primitive Church ; “ which he conceives must needs have arisen, “ from the Uncertainty the first *Christians* were “ under, in Relation to the true Author.

To this, which is made the first Objection, the *Vindicator* answers, p. 29. “ that certainly the “ present Title was us'd long before (he should “ have said some short time before) the End of “ the second Century, because it appears from the “ Writings of *Irenæus* and *Clemens Alexandrinus* “ (who then flourish'd) that the Gospels are spoken

“ ken of according to the Titles now prefix’d
 “ to them.”

Now in Reply the Adversary will be apt to observe, that these Fathers could not possibly know any Thing with Certainty, in Relation to the Author of a Book, suppos’d to have been publish’d without Name or Title, above an Age before ; and that in a far distant Country, whose Language neither of them understood, and where the People themselves did not agree about it ; for as this Gospel had many Names * in its own Country ; so these two Fathers espousing one particular Name, rather than another, can be no Proof, either that it had no other Name at that Time, or that the Name they espous’d it by, was the right Name ; so that the great determining Question here is, Whether the Gospel we are now treating of, did not bear many other Titles or Names besides that it now has, which the *Vindicator* seems not willing to grant, calling for Vouchers?

Now (say *Heretics*) there is nothing more evident, even from the same Fathers, than that *Matthew’s Gospel* was antiently known by the several other Titles, or Names mentioned in the Margin.

That the Gospel according to the Hebrews, as also that according to the Nazarens, or Ebionites, is the same with the Gospel according to Matthew, they prove from hence: Father *Irenæus*, speaking of the *Ebionites* (of his Time, another Name for the Nazarens) † says, they made Use of the Gospel according to Matthew only ; and Father ‖ *Eusebius*, treating of the same People, says, they made Use

* It was entituled and known by the Names of, The Gospel according to the Hebrews, according to the 12 Apostles, to Bartholomew, to James, to Peter, and to Matthew, to Cerinthus, to Tatian, to the Nazarens, to the Ebionites, and to the Encratites.

† *Grabe’s Iren.* l. i. c. 26.

‖ *E. H.* l. iii. c. 25, 27.

Use of that Gospel only, which was according to the Hebrews; so that by these two Fathers compar'd, it is evident, the Gospel according to the Hebrews, and that according to Matthew, are the same one Gospel. We have it again from Epiphanius, — * The Nazarens (says he) had the Gospel according to Matthew wrote in Hebrew most perfect; again, † The Ebionites also receive the Gospel according to Matthew adulterated, for this they with the Cerinthians, only make use of, and no other, they call it the Gospel according to the Hebrews. Jerom relates, § That the Nazarens, and Ebionites in his Time, made use of the Gospel, which he had translated out of Hebrew, call'd the authentic Gospel of Matthew. From all which say Heretics, 'tis evident that the Gospel according to the Hebrews or according to Matthew, as also that according to the Nazarens, or Ebionites, was in its Origin (if we will give any Credit to the Fathers) but one and the same Gospel, tho' 'tis allow'd, that falling into the Hands of different Sects, it was so very much alter'd, as to become in Effect so many distinct Gospels.

Heretics are next to prove by the same Testimony that this same Gospel, intitled according to the Hebrews, or according to Matthew, was also intitled according to the Twelve Apostles; which they do by Father Jerom, *† says he, In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is written in the Chaldee and Syriac Language, but in Hebrew Letters, which the Nazarens use, and is that according to the (twelve) Apostles, or as most think according to Matthew, &c. This last it seems was their Gospel's current Title, contrary to what our Author asserts, p. 80. “ that Jerom never makes the Go-
D “ spel

* Hæres Nazar. 29. n. 9. † Hæres Ebionit. 30. n. 3.
13. § In Matth. xii. *† Adv. Pelag. tom. 2d, lib. 3.
sub init. Toland's Amynt. p. 35.

“spel of *Matthew* to have been the *current Title* of that Gospel, which the *Nazarens* used;” that it was also called the Gospel according to *Peter*, we are told by * *Theodoret*. *The Nazarens* (says he) *made use of that Gospel only, which is according to Peter*.

Sandius a most learned, and sincere Protestant Historian of the last Age, having enumerated most of the Names abovementioned, by which the Gospel, we have been treating of, was particularly known, adds † *That it is not unlikely, but that it might also go by other Names, viz. that of Tatian, and of the || Encratites, of the Apostles, and of James*, so impossible is it (says § this learned Man) for us now to determine with any Certainty concerning the true Author.

Mr. *Jones*, a dissenting Teacher, but as appears by his Works, of great Erudition, and a very laborious and pious Author, observing upon the different Titles belonging many Times to one and the same sacred Book, gives an Instance in the Gospel of *Matthew*: Thus ** (says he) *the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel according to the Nazarens, the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles, the Gospel of Cerinthus, the Gospel of Bartholomew, seem to have been different Names of the same Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew, in some Places perhaps alter'd and interpolated*; for which Variety of Names he assigns the following very good Reasons; viz. 1st, *The Uncertainty Persons were under as to the Au-*

* Lib. 2. Hæret. Fab. c. 2. † Eccl. Hist. p. 5. Edit. ult.

|| The *Encratitæ* alias *Continentes* were not so properly the Disciples of *Tatian* (as the *Vindicator* after *Epiphanius* asserts) as of *Saturninus* and *Marcion* who were before him. Vid. *Grabe's Irenæus*, l. 1. c. 30. *Encratitæ* (says *Grabe* in his Index) a *Saturnino* & *Marcione* orti. § E. H.

** Method of settling the Canon of the *New Test.*

Author; 2dly, *The various Denominations of Heretics, who made use of it, occasion'd its having different Titles*; and 3dly, *because it was not customary for Authors of those Times, to affix Titles to their Works, which consequently render'd 'em uncertain.*

And now 'tis hop'd the *Vindicator* is convinc'd, that 'twas not for Want of Vouchers, but in pure Tendernefs to our present *Gospel*, that the same were omitted in the *Inquiry*. The Case seems to be plainly this. *The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, by whomsoever compos'd, was the original Plan, or Ground Work, from whence all the other *Gospels* mentioned above are deriv'd; as any Sect or Party of *Christians* adopted this celebrated *Gospel*, wandring about without a Name to their Use, they in adjusting it to their particular Tenets, so mangled and alter'd it, that in Effect it became a *new Gospel*, or very different from the same Original, us'd and alter'd likewise by other Sects, and consequently it obtain'd a new Denomination, some ascribing it to *one Apostle*, some to *another*; and sometimes we see it took the Name of a whole Party. The *primitive Christians* framing new *Gospels*, or interpolating and retrenching those already made, at Pleasure, having no Notion in the first Ages of any new * Canon of Scriptures, or that any of them were, or ought to be compos'd by Inspiration. But I say the whole Body of *primitive Christians*, under one Denomination or another, altering or inter-

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pola-

* If it had been suitable to the State of Christianity to have given a new *Canon*, it should seem most proper to have been done by *Jesus*, or his *Apostles*, and not left to any after them to do, especially to weak, fallible, factious and interested Men; but if *Jesus* and his *Apostles* have declar'd no Books Canonical, I would ask who had Authority to do it after them Anonym.

polating this poor *Gospel*, to make it quadrate with their Principles, and intitling it also anew, *Heretics* conceive, it is not possible in the Nature of the Thing, that we should now, at this great Distance of Time, be at any Certainty of having the true *Gospel*, or knowing the true *Author*. It seems indeed to have been universally corrupted, and the most prevailing Name to have descended from the most prevailing Sect. A Man is sometimes sorry to speak the Truth, but why will they extort it from us?

Thus far I think may obviate, all the *Vindicator* hath advanc'd in Relation to external Evidence, by which he would prove the *Gospel* in Dispute, to belong to *Matthew*; only one Thing a Man cannot help taking Notice of, with some Pleasantry, and that is the hard shift he and his Assistants are put to, in order to maintain the Character of old *Papias*, who living in the second Century, is said (but without Foundation) to be the Author of that Tradition which ascribes *this Gospel* to *Matthew*. This Man * *Eusebius* accuseth as having been a Reporter of fabulous Doctrines, of a narrow Understanding, and a Leader of many into Error, and (among others) his † Pupil *Irenæus*, which Censure being so close and severe upon him, the *Vindicator* hath no other Way to claw off than, first by giving a different

Turn

* E. H. l. 3. c. 39. † The *Vindicator* hath thought fit to deny, p. 36. with great Assurance, Abuse, and Vanity, that *Irenæus* was *Papias*'s Scholar, affirming he was *Polycarp*'s, for which there is not the least Pretence in Antiquity: *Irenæus* only says (in *Epist. ad Flor. apud Euseb. E. H. 5. 20.*) that he when a very Child had seen *Polycarp*, and remember'd his Person, and some of his Sayings; and this our Author (I suppose) calls being his Disciple. Whereas *Eusebius* can be understood in no other Sense, when he says (*E. H. 3. 39.*) that old *Papias* led *Irenæus* into Error, by his fabulous Doctrines. Accordingly *Jerom* (in *Epist. 29. ad Theod.*) expressly affirms, that *Irenæus* was *Papias*'s Scholar, taking no Notice of *Polycarp*.

Turn to the Words, and then denying, p. 35.
 “ that they any way detract from *Papias’s* Cre-
 “ dit, as a Relator of Matters of Fact, or p. 37.
 “ disqualify him for reporting ordinary and well
 “ known Traditions.”

But is not this very extraordinary? Am I then
 to build my Faith and my Hope upon a Tradition,
 deriv’d from a Man of little Understanding, and
 no Judgment; and who in fact was a Teacher
 of false Doctrines? Yes, says the *Vindicator*,
 “ this by no means disqualifying him for re-
 “ porting ordinary and well known Traditions;”
 insinuating, as if *Matthew’s* being the Author of
 the Gospel in Debate and no other, was one of
 those well known Traditions. “ However the fol-
 “ lowing Fathers (continues he) did not support
 “ the Genuineness of this Gospel from the Tra-
 “ dition of any single Man, but from the Tra-
 “ dition of the apostolical Churches traced up
 “ to the Apostles their Founders; on these Prin-
 “ ciples (says he) do all the Writers of the third
 “ Century ascribe to St. *Matthew*, and to him on-
 “ ly, the Gospel which goes by his Name.”

Now let him but allow *Heretics* the *Christians*
 of the first Century, which they claim; and they
 will yield to him the *Fathers* of the third, who
 could know nothing of this Gospel but from their
 Testimony. But to this possibly will be said,
 that those *Fathers* took not their Tradition from
 the heretical Jews, but from the apostolical Church-
 es; but *Heretics* will ask where those apostolical
 Churches then subsisted, since the only apostoli-
 cal Church for whose Sake the Gospel in Debate is
 said to have been compos’d, had another tradi-
 tion, and another Gospel.

I find the *Vindicator*, as well as the *Bishop*, hath
 a good Liking to oral Tradition, for no other
 is meant by the Tradition of the apostolical Church-
 es,

es, without which 'tis granted, p. 42. " the Gen-
 " nuineness of sacred Books and their faithful
 " Transmission cannot be satisfactorily made out :"
 So that after all, we are reduc'd not to *written*,
 but to *oral Tradition* for the sure *Word of God* ;
 and that without Regard to the *Stamp of its own*
divine Authority, which it carries or ought to
 carry with it.

But why then is the Romish Church so much
 to blame, for leaning to the same Tradition?
 " Because says the *Vindicator*, p. *ibid.* very de-
 " murely, they found (also) religious Doctrines
 " on it repugnant to Scripture, and to written
 " Tradition both." But 'tis his Mistake, for all
 their Doctrines are founded, or pretended to be
 founded, either upon *Scripture*, or else upon the
 Decrees, or Determinations of Councils ; they no
 more regard *oral Tradition*, than *Protestants*. Be-
 sides if they did, where I pray lies the greater
 Blame, and Danger, in taking up with a few
 Doctrines only, upon the Credit of *oral Tradi-*
tion, or making the Holy Books themselves to
 depend on it, together with the, as uncertain writ-
 ten Tradition from the Fathers? The *Vindicator*
 seems to forget, that all written Tradition of
 the Fathers, concerning the Authority of Scrip-
 ture is at best founded upon oral Tradition, if
 not their own Inventions ; and not upon any *Acts*
 as has been observ'd before. The *Fathers* too
 in almost all their Traditions, following one an-
 other like so many Geese in a Train, having nei-
 ther the Honesty, nor Abilities any of them, to
 look carefully into Things, or to consider the
 Nature of that Evidence by which only they
 ought to have been govern'd in Relation to sa-
 cred ~~Things~~ *matters*

For tho' 'tis fit we should give our *Assent* some-
 times to *Truths*, upon the bare *Testimony* of others,
 yet

yet this *Assent* will be stronger or weaker, as the *Testimony* is more or less reasonable; all *traditionary Evidence* is external to us, and if true, nevertheless arises not from our own Perception, but the Perception of others, for which Reason we should be ever cautious about it; and after all, such Evidence at the highest, is but probable, for Men bred up to strong Prejudices, are very liable to be deceiv'd, or they may, for certain Ends, deceive others; single Men may testify a Falshood, and several Persons may combine to testify the same Falshood, so that Testimony before it can become the Object of a reasonable Assent, must be attended with these two Circumstances, Credibility of *Persons* and Credibility of *Things*, for by these we are to judge of all History. For instance, if what is related as fact, be agreeable to Reason and Experience, and we know the Relators to be Men of good Sense, and great Fidelity, then we have the highest external Evidence of the Truth. But if the Relation be of a Fact suppos'd to have been done, some thousands or hundreds of Years before our Time, and we cannot come at the Characters of the first Relators, the Evidence is very much decreas'd; but if the Characters of the intermediate Relators, are well known, and we have Reason to believe, from their Compositions or otherwise that they were both weak, enthusiastical, self-interested, and designing Knaves, easily impos'd on themselves, and dispos'd to deceive others, than the Relation deserves no Credit.

And such a Set of Men I take the Fathers or Heads of Parties to have been, almost to a Man, during the four first Centuries, and some Time after, injudicious in all they relate, taken up with every idle Report, unfaithful, ignorant of true Religion, Bigots, knavish in all favourite

rite Points of Divinity, silly Reasoners, Betrayers of true Christianity, Platonists. This all Men see, or may see, if they will acquaint themselves with their Writings, and that instead of establishing Holy Scripture with their Testimonies, they have render'd it the most precarious Thing in the World.

I am sorry the *Vindicator* should say, p. 26, 27. *that heavy Charges of this Nature come unsupported from Infidel Authors*, and monstiously assert again, *that a Religion descended from Heaven owes its Propagation to such Instruments*; what greater Slur could this Man put upon Christianity, or what greater Advantage could he give the *Deist* against it, than to make it owe its Authority, and Increase, to the Patriotism and Providence of such Men.

Is it not certainly known, and daily to be prov'd, not from precarious *oral*, or *written Tradition* deduc'd from it, to which we are sent for Proof of Holy Scripture, but from the *Fathers* own Mouths, even their Works, that they were the immediate Broachers, and flowing Sources, of all those Divisions, and that Infidelity, which now are, or ever yet reign'd within the Christian Pale.

The *Dissertation-Writer* had said, that all the "*Fathers* cited by the *Bishop* to vouch for the "*Gospels* were *Heretics*," but I take upon me to affirm, not only that these, but every single *Father* before the second general Council (held Anno 381) were rank *Heretics* and *Enemies* to the *Catholic Church*, i. e. as *Catholicism* now goes, not excepting the great *Athanasius* himself. If the *Vindicator* knows, or remembers not this, let him look over Mr. *Daille*; *Huetius Origenian*. l. 2. c. 2. q. 2. f. 10. or *D. Petavius de Trinitate*, lib. 1. c. 3, 4, 5, and 8. and they will abundantly

ly satisfy him as to most of them, that they err'd in the capital Articles of the Catholic Faith, and we know certainly their Tenets stand condemn'd, by the Resolutions, and Decrees, of *national Synods*, and *general Councils*.

Hear only what the famous M. *Le Clerc* says of the *general Councils* holden in the fourth Century: " * Weak Princes assembled a Pack of " *paltry Greeks*, who had spent their Lives in " the Art of Cavilling about *Words*, without " the least Knowledge in *Things*, so very fond of " Wrangling, that they were in eternal Feuds among themselves. To these were added, some " few from the West, more stupid and ignorant " indeed, but not a whit more honest, who " after much scandalous Quarrelling, did at last " by their own Authority, establish certain unintelligible Propositions, in such Terms, as " for the most part were very improper, which " the Vulgar implicitly reverenc'd as the most " Holy Truths."

" There is nothing († says our present excellent " *Archbishop*) in Antiquity, which either more " expos'd our Christian Profession heretofore, or " may more deserve our serious Consideration " at this Day, than the Violence, the Passion, " the Malice, the Falseness, and the Oppression, " which reign'd in most of those *Synods* held by " *Constantine* the first, and after him by the " following *Emperors* upon the Occasion of the " *Arian Controversy*. Bitter are the Complaints " which we are told that great *Emperor* made " of them. The *Barbarians* (says he in a || Letter to one of them) for fear of us worship God, " but we mind what only tends to Hatred,

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" to

* *Ars Critic.* c. 5. † Authority of Christian Princes, p. 307. || *Sozom.* l. 2. c. 28.

“ to Dissention, in one Word to the Destruction
“ of Mankind.”

Gregory Nazianzen (in his * Time the Glory of the Christian Name) in his Letter to *Procopius* tells him, “ That he fled all Assemblies of Bishops, because he never knew a good and happy End of any Council, but that they did rather increase than lessen the Evil; that the Love of Contention and Ambition always overcame their Reason.” And in his other Letters, 71, 72, 74. “ He declares his Resolution again of never going to any Council, because nothing was to be heard there but Geese and Cranes fighting without Understanding. There (says he) we may see Divisions, Quarrels, and shameful Things which were hid before, and are collected into one Place with cruel Men.”

Archbishop Tillotson speaking of a certain general Council says “ † That if a general Council of Atheists had met together with a Design to abuse Religion, by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually.”

In a Word, a Man might fill Volumes, with the bare Recital only, and that from the very best Authorities, of the Impieties and senseless Vanities of the *Fathers*; but indeed ecclesiastical History hath done it already to our Hands, being itself but a § Compendium of their Vices; — but to return more immediately to my Subject.

Having in the preceeding Sections shewn, it is not without Grounds, *Heretics* frequently object
against

* This Father flourish'd about the latter End of the 4th Century. † Rule of Faith, part 4. s. 1. § Qui legit ecclesiasticam Historiam, quid legit nisi Vitia Episcoporum? Grot.

against the Authority of *Matthew's Gospel*, that it hath gone under so many different *Titles* or *Names* in the first Ages, that it is utterly impracticable for us now, to come at the true Author. I may fairly conclude here on the Point of *external Evidence*, or at least till such Time, as this grand Heretical Objection touching the *Author* is well remov'd; for if we can be at no Certainty about the *Author*, we can have no Assurance from *external Evidence*, that the Book was compos'd by Inspiration. I say if we have lost the *Author*, all Evidence of that Kind is at an End, and we must have Recourse to *internal Evidence* only, we are oblig'd to see, what Proof the *Gospel* itself affords of its own *Divinity*.

Indeed this is the surest, if not the only proper Test, by which the Word of God can be fairly try'd; we must allow, that there are, or ought to be, in the Scriptures, *manifest Characters* of God speaking in them, by which, as by so many *Criteria*, to distinguish them from *human Composures*, and to inform the Bulk of Mankind, who are not capable of searching into *Church-Testimony*, that they came from God: But to my great Surprise, I do not find the *Vindicator* hath attempted to discover any Thing of that Nature; nay, he seems to despair, of being ever able to make good our present *Gospels*, from the Witness they bear of their own *Divinity*. For he admits, p. 42. "that neither their Genuineness, nor faithful

"Transmission, can be satisfactorily made out, without *human* (or *external*) *Testimony*;" which to be sure is a great Point given up to *Infidels*, especially when he knows, with respect to the *Gospel* before us, that they pretend to prove, even from its own *Internals*, that it can be no other than a *Composure* merely human, and

that too, of some very illiterate and unexper-
ienc'd Writer.

'Tis true, the *Vindicator* hath labour'd to clear it of all Objections arising from the *Internals* thereof, so far, as to give it the Appearance of a *consistent human Composure without Error*, he aims at no more, affecting to distinguish himself in this Point from the *Bishop*, who conceives it necessary; " * that the N. T. Books (*i. e.* the whole " of them) should be written under the imme-
" diate Direction of the *Holy Spirit*, not mere-
" ly for the Avoidance of *Error*, but because
" the Things to be deliver'd in them, were a-
" bove the Reach of natural Reason; " whereas his *Vindicator* thinks, he hath enough upon his Hands, to vindicate the Book in Dispute from mere Error, he will not undertake to prove it a divine Performance, from any peculiar Excellence to be perceiv'd in it superior to human, whether with Regard to Method, Style, Doctrines or historical Matter contain'd in it; tho' was God as sollicitous after human Praise, as our Author presumptuously makes him in † another Place, we should find him to excell in every one of these, and challenge the Honour of it.

We see all other God's Works, with which we are every Way gloriously encompass'd, manifest themselves to be of divine Production, they want no human Instruments to vouch for them, and my Lord of London hath particularly affirm'd § of all the Writings of the N. T. that they have the Stamp of divine Authority impress'd on them, which however he or his *Vindicator* had done well to shew, by laying before *Infidels*, one or more Instances of such Stamp,

* Past. Lett. p. 66.
Lett. p. 7.

† Vindicat. p. 37.

§ Past.

Stamp, discoverable in any Part of the *Gospel* before us.

But no, — they refer you altogether to *human Testimony*, and that the lowest and most suspected of all other, even the *Testimony* of *Party-Men*, and *Enthusiasts*; as also to *Impostures*, or feign'd Pieces under their Names. But if our Heads of the Church, shall with our Author once admit, that the *Word of God*, can be no otherwise made good, and that we must rely wholly for *Revelation*, on the Judgment and Veracity of *Fathers* and *Impostures*, they should no longer wonder, there are so many *Sceptics* and *Infidels* among us; for was the Generality of Men but once aware, that *Revelation* stood upon no other Foundation, we should soon find it decline as fast as ever it at first gain'd Ground among us.

But I will examine now in as few Words as possible, how well the *Vindicator* and his Adjutants have clear'd *Matthew's Gospel* of Objections, drawn from the *Internals* thereof.

It hath been an *old Objection*, “ that if *Matthew* was the Author of the *Gospel* we receive
“ in his Name, where he is incidentally mentioned
“ with others in the third Person, he would have
“ mention'd himself with some distinguishing
“ Note in the first.”

No says our Author very simply, p. 39. “ for
“ *Cæsar* in his *Commentaries* does the same
“ Thing very often,” tho', p. 91. he raises
Doubts whether *Cæsar* was indeed the Author of
those *Commentaries*, and so destroys his own Argument. But why does he mention *Cæsar's Commentaries*, which were like to suffer by the same Fault, and oppose these to *Matthew's Gospel*? as if the Author of the *one*, was as requisite to be perpetuated as the Author of the *other*. Besides what was decent and proper in *Cæsar*, speaking

ing of his own great Actions, was in *Matthew* treating of another, whom he had to exalt to the Skies upon his own Authority, quite the reverse. But 'tis enough that ecclesiastical History shews, the fatal Effects of this Author's Concealment, for from hence hath arose, all that Combustion among the *first Christians*, touching the true Author of this *Gospel*, and *Heretics* too were hereby embolden'd, to make free with it, in the Manner already mention'd without Remorse, which they dar'd not have done to the Work of an *holy Apostle*; so that (say *Infidels*) by this Sculking behind of the Author, we have not only lost all Certainty of *himself*, but of his *Gospel* too.

Another *Objection* from the *Internals* of this *Gospel* is, " That if *Matthew* had been the Author, " he would never have denoted himself to have
man " been a *Publican*, a Species of Men (among the
 " superstitious *Jews* for whose Sake this *Gospel*
 " is said to have been compos'd) of all others the
 " most detestable; insomuch that a Book wrote
 " by any who had ever been under that Charac-
 " ter, would never be look'd upon, nor touch'd
 " by them." This indeed is an *Objection* of that Force, that one would think the *Vindicator* should have been afraid to meet it. For can any Thing demonstrate greater Folly and Madness, than for an Historian to destroy his own Reputation, and put an End to that Credit for which he writes? But to this the *Vindicator* (never abash'd) answers, not by excusing, but greatly aggravating the Vice. Says he p. 39. "*Matthew* also relates, that our
 " Lord the great Subject of that History freely
 " convers'd and ate with Publicans, and shall *Mat-*
 " *thew* conceal his own past Relation to them?"
for ~~Now~~ — ~~but~~ as he was inditing a History to the *Jews*, these Particulars (say *Heretics*) being no Illustration of his Subject, but a great Lessening of
 it

it rather, had been much better omitted, both of himself, and his Lord too. To which the *Vindicator* will by no Means agree ; on the contrary, he says, “ it has been thought by some judicious Persons, “ that the Mention of *Matthew the Publican* is a “ good internal Argument that this Gospel is “ rightly ascrib'd to him, for it is observable of “ the sacred Writers, that they are generally the “ most free with the Mention of their own Fail- “ ings.”

I remember *Barnabas* (another of our Author's sacred Writers) somewhere in his Catholic Epistle relates, that *Christ's Disciples all of them, were once the greatest Sinners in Nature* ; from which our Author seems wickedly to infer, they were so brim-full of their own Iniquities, that they must needs now and then run over. For if this was not the Case, I cannot see, why Writers of History especially, should make so free with their own Failings ; 'tis meer *Suicide*, when Men are charg'd privately with Folly, there seems to be some Ingenuity to own it with Repentance ; but this can be no Reason, why we should blaze it abroad, without Wit or Will, to our own Destruction.

The *third Objection* the *Vindicator* pretends to answer, is of the same Nature with the former. *Heretics* (it seems) have been disturb'd, “ that “ *Matthew* should give no other Testimony of “ himself, than the *bad one* above related, which “ they think had been better omitted, and the “ World acquainted, that he was an *Apostle* ; it “ had not been amiss neither they say, if he had “ let us know the Time when he wrote, to whom, “ and upon what Motives, and Information of “ Facts ; and lastly, that he was influenc'd by “ the *H. Spirit* at the Time of Writing, to make “ his History, as it contain'd many extraordinary

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“ ry Incidents, *above the Reach of human Reason*, and was the first of the Kind, go down the
 “ better.”

This fancy'd Neglect in *Matthew* as an Historian, the *Vindicator* offers to excuse in this Manner. Says he, p. 41. “ The immediate End and
 “ Design of *St. Matthew's Gospel* was not the
 “ Conversion of *Infidels* but the Edification of
 “ *Believers* (*i. e.* of the *Jews* his own Country-
 “ men): Considering therefore the Occasion of
 “ his Writing, his Silence as to the Points in the
 “ Objection, is so far from being a Defect, that
 “ those Particulars could not have been inserted,
 “ without manifest Absurdity; it had been ridiculous in the Author, to have told his Countrymen, what they perfectly knew before; and
 “ then as to us, who live at this Distance of
 “ Time, those Particulars (so far as necessary)
 “ are supply'd by constant and uniform Tradition.” This is the Sum of his Argument, than which nothing could be invented more illusory and a bufile.

For first he speaks of the *Jews* as a little People, having all of them, a familiar Knowledge of one another. 2dly, It appears not that the *Gospel* was compos'd for their Sake more particularly, otherwise than by written Tradition, founded upon oral (without Learning) of above 300 Years standing; neither had ecclesiastical Historians other Reason to say it was wrote for the *Jews*, than for that they imagin'd it to be the only *Gospel* of the four, that was wrote in their Language, which very Thing too has been since controverted. Besides the Distinction our Author affects to make, between the *Gospel* in Dispute, and the other *Gospels*, viz. that it was not so specially design'd for the Conversion of *Infidels*, is a mere Invention of his own, this *Gospel* having nothing in it distinct from
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the Rest, that can give the least Ground for such Notion; but to speak the Truth, Tradition (was it worth Notice) is against our Author in this Respect, * for that tells us St. Bartholomew chose this very Gospel to carry with him into India, to the End surely to make use of it there, for the Conversion of Infidels; so little Credit is due to Ecclesiastics, when they argue on the Side of Orthodoxy, if they have but a stupid Father to quote; they will dispute against common Sense, and if they have none, they'll forge.

As to the fourth *Heretical Objection*, which charges this Gospel " with Dislocations, Impro-
 " prieties, Disagreements, and Contradictions,
 " which Divines have pointed out in their Com-
 " ments on it, and which 'tis imagin'd the Holy
 " Spirit could never be the Author of, and con-
 " sequently that it is an apocryphal Gospel." The *Vindicator* answers and says, p. 43. " That
 " no Divines, learned or pious, ever pretended
 " to point out *real Contradictions*, and *Disagree-*
 " *ments*; what they have labour'd to reconcile
 " were but *Appearances* only; but as to *Disloca-*
 " *tions* and *Improprieties* of Speech, these (he ad-
 " mits) are allow'd, both by *Harmonists* and
 " *Commentators* in this Gospel, but will not have
 " them father'd on the *Holy Ghost*; for that 'tis
 " generally suppos'd the *Blessed Spirit* left Me-
 " thod, and Diction, entirely to the Prudence of
 " the sacred Writers, he only took Care to pre-
 " serve them from all Error." But why not al-
 so from all Appearances of Error, which in Effect
 are real Error? and why were they not instruct-
 ed also, as to Order of Time, and Propriety of
 Speech, so essential to good History? neither of
 which 'tis all'dg'd Matthew had the Prudence to
 F observe;

* Euseb. E. H. l. 5. c. 10. Jerom. Catal. vir. illustr. in Bartholom.

observe ; what a Shuffler is this, and who appris'd him and his Friends I would fain know, of such limited divine Dispensation?

'The *fifth Objection* answer'd, relates to the *Genealogy*, in which begging Mr. Twells's Pardon, I think him egregiously impertinent (that is) full of pitiful Shifts and Evasions to no Purpose. He says first, p. 46. " 'Tis impossible any orthodox " Person should allow the *Genealogy* of *Matthew* " to be utterly irreconcilable to other Parts of " Holy Writ, as the *Inquirer* hath affirm'd ; " and yet himself (whom I dare vouch for, to be at the tip top of Orthodoxy, and in Hopes to be preferr'd on that Account) himself I say, a little after, p. 48. says " It has been confess'd, and " cannot be deny'd, but that there are some *Dis-* " *agreements* between the two Accounts (*viz.* those " of *Matthew* and the *Old Testament*) and a vast " Diversity (he calls it) between the *Genealogies* " of *Matthew* and *Luke*." Nay, he owns p. 49. " that from *David* downwards, the two *Evange-* " *lists* scarce agree in any Names, save those of " *Salathiel* and *Zorobabel* ; " but is not this giving into all the *Inquirer* can be understood to mean, when he says " *Matthew's Genealogy* is irrecon- " cileable to other Parts of *Holy Writ*." 'Tis enough (*Heretics* imagine) to prove this *Genealogy* *spurious* that it varies from *Holy Writ* in the Manner he allows, and farther that the *Gospel* the first *Christians* made use of, had it not, and that * *Father Tatian* also in his *Dia Tesson* left it out.

The 6th and 9th *Objections* relating to " *Pro-* " *phesies* quoted by the Author of the *Gospel* in " *Dispute*, out of the *Old Testament*, and which " are charg'd to be falsely quoted and misap- " ply'd by him," have I find given our Author no small Trouble to answer, and which he hath done

* Theodoret. Har. fab. l. i. c. 20.

done in a Manner, that shews him to be very little Master of that Subject ; but this being too large a Field of Disputation to be enter'd upon here, and besides the same having been already exhausted, between our present learned *Bishop of Durham*, and the late more rational and ingenuous Mr. *Collins*, I chuse to refer to their Discourses ; only cannot but observe, with what triumphant Malice the *Vindicator* attacks the *Inquirer* on this Head, as having misrepresented *Jerom's* Sentiment upon *Matthew's* Citation of *Micah* v. 2. in the Margin of his *Inquiry*, p. 67. The whole Matter is this, — *Jerom* in his Comment on *Micah* says, “ there were those in his Time, “ who affirm'd, that almost all the Testimonies “ cited in the New Testament out of the Old, “ were in one Respect or other erroneous ; ” which Sentiment of many in his own Time, as *Jerom* does not there oppose, but in * other Parts of his Works, shews manifestly again and again that he was himself of the same Opinion. The *Inquirer* therefore in a marginal Note only, gives it as such, and not as that of his Contemporaries, which had been much stronger for his Purpose, and for this the *Vindicator* is so unmercifully insulting ; whereas the Matter itself is of no Moment, for have we not all, the *Old Testament* to compare with the *New*, as well as *Jerom*, and need we any more than our own Eyes to see, and be convinc'd, that the Quotations in the *New Testament* out of the *Old* scarce ever agree?

The 10th *Objection* relates to the Time of *Jesus's* Nativity, which *Matthew* supposes to have happen'd in the Reign of *Herod* the Great, whereas *Luke* places it in the first Year of *Cyrenius's* Government of *Syria*, which was eleven Years af-

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* Vid. inter al. his Letter to *Pammachius* de optimo Genere interpretandi. tom. 2. p. 365.

ter *Herod's Death*. In Answer, p. 62. the *Vindicator* admits, *this to have been indeed a Difficulty with the Learned long ago*, but to avoid solving, or saying any Thing to, it himself, he pretends *Infidels* have receiv'd full Satisfaction in it from them; which Satisfaction 'tis true lies in this: That Divines, all chronological Divines, have given up this Point to *Infidels*, allowing the Evangelist (as now read) is guilty of a notorious Anachronism.

The 7, 8, 11, and 12th Objections, which *Heretics* make to " what they deem a wild Enthusiastical Account, which *Matthew* gives us of three Wise-Men, coming somewhere from the East, and led they know not how, by a new Star, upon an Errand, as they conceive in the Issue of no Importance, whether true or false, and of the Slaughter, of they know not how many thousands of Infants, his own Subjects by King *Herod*, all compris'd in his second Chapter; of which Wise-Men Star, or Slaughter of Infants, no Man in this World ever heard, but from the Author of this Gospel only." These four Heretical Objections (I say) are left much in the same State, and Force, the *Vindicator* found them in the Inquiry. He grants, p. 58. " astrological Notions have no Foundation in Nature, or Reality, but thinks there is no Absurdity in supposing God should notify the Birth of an extraordinary Person (to three Men only) in this extraordinary Manner, (he says) admitting the Phenomenon to be a real Star, the Difficulty would be insuperable, but supposing it to be a luminous Body only, which in the Magi's Country seemed to be in the starry Region, but afterwards moved so low, as to direct them in their Way and to point out

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“ the desired House ; this has nothing in it (he
 “ thinks) incredible, or that can disparage the
 “ History ; ” i. e. had *Matthew* put a *luminous*
Body instead of a *Star*, all then had been well ;
 but as he now relates it, the *History* is (in our
 Author’s Opinion) disparag’d, and of no Credit.
 As to the Slaughter of the Infants, the *Vindicator*
 (after others) pretends, p. 64. *Matthew*’s Account
 is verifi’d by one * *Macrobius*, a Writer of the
 latter End of the fourth Century; but as *Augustus*’s
 Reflection in *Macrobius* hath no Relation to
 the Slaughter of the *Infants*, so is it *mal a propos*
 to the Fact with Respect to *Herod*’s Son, for
Herod had no Son slain among the Infants, nor
 could have, being himself too old. And besides
 ’tis an unanswerable Objection (as Mr. *Collins* ob-
 serves) to the Authority of this *Macrobius*, that
 what he says 400 Years after the Fact, occurs
 in no Author before him, from whom he could
 take it, and from whence ’tis conjectur’d that he
 pick’d it up at *Theodosius*’s Court.

After this the *Vindicator* lays together another
 Species of *heretical Objections* tending to prove,
 that *Matthew* (the Apostle) was not qualify’d to
 compile a faithful History of *Christ*’s Life and
 Actions, which *Objections* he proceeds to examine ;
 but omits the chief Part of the first *Objection*,
 which is, “ That *Matthew* being (as confess’d)
 “ a poor simple, illiterate Man, cannot be sup-
 “ pos’d in any Degree capable to write *Histo-*
 “ ry, especially a *History*, which requir’d
 “ the utmost Accuracy and Attention, as being
 “ of the utmost Consequence to the World.”

But

* This Author in a Chapter of the ingenious Sayings of
 the Emperor *Augustus*, tells us that, when *Augustus* heard *He-*
rod’s Son was kill’d among the Infants under two Years old,
 said, it was better to be *Herod*’s Hog than his Son. *Saturnal.*
 l. 2. c. 4.

1. 27. 28. But to this he thinks he has already answer'd, p. 44. in taking Part there, with that most unaccountable Notion of St. Paul, in 1 Cor.; ~~xxiii.~~ 28. so deservedly exploded in the *Inquiry*, in Defence of which our Author thus argues; says he, "which Way could God manifest his Wisdom and Power, in reforming the Wise more eminently, than by the Use of such Instruments as were naturally least fit for the Purpose." *What a notable Compliment our Author pays here to Jesus and his Apostles.* But I would ask, Does it not shew the highest Wisdom in all Operations, to adapt the fittest Means to the End, and is not God always supposed so to act? No,—for says the *Vindicator*, *ibid.* *had such a (blessed) Reformation (as Christianity hath produced) been carried on by able Hands, the Praise of it had redounded to the Reformers themselves, so that God had been deprived of it.*

Alas for these Men! what poor Conceptions have they of infinite Being, to make him thus gaping, and solicitous after human Commendation; let us no longer wonder at their other *Heresies*, when they err so egregiously in the great Fundamental of all, even in the Belief of him, upon our right Conceptions of whom, all Religion is immediately and invariably founded; these Men we consider as in worse State than *Atheists* themselves, for 'tis infinitely more shocking to Reason (as * Mr. Bayle observes) to say there is a God subject to Failings, and Frailties, than to say there is no God at all.

As to the Remainder of the *Objection* stated by the *Vindicator*, which regards "Matthew's coming so late to the *Apostolate*, that great Part of what he wrote concerning *Jesus*, must needs have sprung from the Report of others."

This

* Tract on a Comet, sect. 123.

This was never meant by the *Inquirer* as an *Objection*, but as an Answer to, or mere *Denial* rather of, what the *Bishop* had rashly asserted; *
 “ that *Jesus*’s Disciples recorded nothing of him,
 “ but what they had heard from his own Mouth,
 “ and saw with their own Eyes, they delivered
 “ nothing upon the Report of Others,” the contrary of which is made evidently true, from *Matthew*’s own shewing, as the *Vindicator*, p. 15. found himself under the Necessity of granting. To pass therefore to the other *Infidel Objection*, which is, “ That *Matthew* wrote so
 “ very late in Time, viz. not till 64 or 65
 “ Years after the *Nativity*, or above 30 Years after
 “ the *Crucifixion*, during all which Time it was
 “ impossible in the Nature of the Thing, he
 “ should retain in his Memory such a Number
 “ of Facts, Sermons, Doctrines, Promises, Prophecies, and cursory Sayings, as were done
 “ and said by *Jesus* during his Ministry without
 “ great Omission.”

To this the *Vindicator*, p. 68. answers, and submits, “ That ’tis probable indeed *St. Matthew*’s
 “ Gospel was not written, till *Anno* 61 or 62,” but then he will have *Infidels* to know, “ That *Matthew*, besides his bare Memory, had also the
 “ Assistance of the Holy Ghost.” When Men in Defect of Argument fly to *Miracles* and *Mystery*, ’tis high Time always to give over Debate. But let us see what hath been said to this Pretence of our Author. Many think the Promise of divine Assistance, had Relation only, to the *Apostles* preaching the Word of God, and not to their inditing *Jesus*’s Life and Actions, for which no such Assistance was either † promised, or necessary; for what Need is there, that a Man should be inspired, for setting down plain Mat-
 ters

ters of Fact, of which himself was an Eye-Witness. Besides, all God's Promises are conditional, and ever imply the doing our Parts towards their Performance, but which the *Apostles* were so far from complying with, that ten out of twelve, we find, have given us no *Memoirs* of *Jesus* at all, and the two that did, we are told also, had no Inclination but were actually * *compelled*, by some Sort of Necessity so to do, in Compliance to the Commands or Requests of others, and not to any Motion of the Holy Ghost; tho' (Infidels Object) they had kept him waiting from first to last, *i. e.* from his qualifying them with Tongues, to the composing their respective *Gospels*, the One at least thirty Years, and the other almost the Age of Man. Therefore (say they) to imagine the *Holy Ghost* waited upon these Men's Motions so long, in order to inspire them instantaneously, whenever they should be in Humour to write, and further also to assist those Memories, which, but for the Apostles own Neglect, had been sufficient of themselves, is to imagine such an arbitrary Fondness, and Partiality in the Deity, as would be contemptible in an ordinary Man. But as our Author scorns to shrowd himself under a Cloud, let us hear what he says further.

He says, "it was *Matthew's daily Work* (even " from *Christ's* Ascension to the Publication of " his *Gospel*) to preach and declare the Particulars of his History," which (I observe) is but mere *gratis Dictum* of our Author, *Matthew* nowhere intimating that he preached at all. But I appeal to *Naturalists* in the Case before us, if 'tis possible for the *Mind of Man*, to lay up first so many

* Euseb. E. H. l. 3. c. 24. for so the Greek ought to be rendered, *Necessitate quadam ad Scribendum impulsos* (says *Valesius*) vid. *Jerom. præfat. Com. in Matth. & Catal. Vir. illustr. in Joann.*

many *Ideas* of all Kinds, as the many Particulars mentioned in the *Objection* imply, and then to retain those same *Ideas* afterwards, for above thirty Years together, without Loss, even tho' we should suppose such Diligence used, as that some or other of those *Ideas* were industriously revived in the Memory every Day, which is vain to think; but I say even in that Case, there would necessarily arise, a very great Variation in taking down Facts, and Discourses, after such a Length of Time. This we experience daily, in those who are accustomed to tell old Stories, we find they scarce ever repeat them without some Differences in the Relation, and many Times, in material Circumstances.

And that this was indeed the Case of the *Evang-
gelists* is most evident, from the many Omissions and Inconsistences (to say no worse) that are found among them, in relating the same Facts; and a very great Defect must likewise be confessed to be, in the Abridgment we now have of *Jesus's* Life, if * so many other Things might have been written of him, as that the *World* itself could not have contained the Books.

But I would observe farther, that our Author is so little ashamed of attributing to the *Apostles* such a supernatural Strength of Memory, as hath been already mentioned, that he enlargeth the same Capacity in *Heathens* much farther, for he does not doubt, p. 70. "but that many of
"these were living, who could have detected
"even *St. John*, if his *Gospel* had contained any
"Falshoods," tho' in Relation to innumerable Particulars done and said (the latest of them) 64 Years before, in which Space all *Judaea* and the Countries round about were laid waste, and the People dispers'd; and all this our Author does not scruple to maintain, for the Sake of bearing out

* John xxi. 25.

the *Bishop*, who insists upon the same Impossibility, and upon which he in great Measure indeed most unhappily founds, the *Truth* and *Authority* of the *Gospel History*, even upon the Knowledge *Heathens* are supposed to have had of it, at its first coming forth, and their Silence nevertheless with Respect to it. His Lordship and his *Vindicator* makes this *Silence*, with Respect to the History of a Person, who, as the *Gospels* testify, lay concealed, and was known to few, and who was dead at least thirty Years, before any History of him appeared, a Proof nevertheless of the Truth of such History. At the same Time, that the *Vindicator*, p. 63, 64. will not admit, the same Silence in Relation to the *Slaughter of the Infants* (a Fact so notorious, that if committed, the World must have rung of it) to be good Argument against such Fact. But is not this to contend for Victory, not Truth; and to make *Infidels*, rather than refute them?—As indeed the manifest Insincerity of the Clergy, in all their religious Disputes, will always have that Effect.

The next and last *Objection* of this Species, (and under which I shall include all *Heretics* urge, against the faithful Transmission of *Matthew's Gospel*) is this, viz. “That the Original was
“ adulterated by the first Converts, or in other
“ Words, by the *Nazarines* and *Ebionites*.”

This is so known a Fact in History, that 'till I saw the *Objection* laid down to be controverted, I could not believe it. Indeed the *Vindicator* inclines to admit, the *Gospel* may have received Alterations, but not by the first Converts; he says, p. 73. “*Ecclesiastical Writers* do not
“ impute its Alterations to the first Converts,
“ but to their Successors.” Whereas those Writers make no such Distinction, only report, that it was altered, or adulterated by the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*. “But there's the Question (says
“ our

“our Author, a little after, p. 78.) whether the “Nazarenes were indeed the *first Converts*,” and would send us to a little Doctor for Information.

But I would ask our Author, if the *first Converts* (among the *Jews*) did not bear the Name of *Nazarenes*, what other more proper Name he thinks they bore? and if he can give us none more proper, whether it is not highly probable, at least, that they might go by that Name, as being the Disciples of *Jesus of Nazareth*; 'tis certain we find St. Paul accused on that Account by the same Name (that is) *as being a Ring-leader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*, which Paul took to himself without Denial; such a *Christian Sect* therefore there certainly was, in the Apostolic Age, tho' our Author after his usual Confidence is pleased to assert, p. 33. *that in the first Age no such Name (or Sect) probably subsisted*, and p. 78, 79. *that almost four entire Centuries passed without the least Mention of any such Christian Sect as that of the Nazarenes*. I am ashamed here, for the gross Ignorance this Man betrays not only of Scripture, but of all Antiquity; † for under this Name it was, the antient *Jews* thrice every Day, solemnly anathematized in their Synagogues, their Countrymen who were *Christians*, which Name no doubt descended to them by Tradition; they had it from the Beginning, as we also learn from || *Epiphanius* (says he) *all Christians were at first called Nazarenes, they and the Cerinthians began at the same Time*; to the same Purpose *Eusebius* speaking of the *Ebionites* (another Name of the *Nazarenes*) § says he, *at the same Time with them we learn there was one Cerinthus, &c. which Cerinthus was contemporary with the Apostles*.

G 2

Now

* Acts xxiv. 5. 14.
Com. in Isaiah, c. 5.
L 2. c. 27.

† Epiph. Hær. 29. n. 9. Jerom.
|| Hær. 29. n. 1. 4. 6. § E. H.

Now that the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* were two Denominations only of the same *Christians*, is evident by their using the same Gospel, and having the same * Tenets, or with very little Variation; the Name of *Nazarenes* they took originally from their Master, of whom it was foretold he should be † called a *Nazarene*, the Name of *Ebionites* (i. e. *Hebrew*, poor Men) and sometimes that of *Mineans* (i. e. *Hebrew*, Heretics) these were given them by their Enemies; and tho' *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* were probably the first who treat of them under the former Name; yet they treat of them, as being descended from the primitive *Christians* of *Jerusalem*, and I have made it plain even from Scripture, that the Name subsisted even from the Beginning: *Irenæus* and *Eusebius*, treating of the whole Body of *Jewish Christians*, call them *Ebionites*, and *Origen* who sojourn'd himself some Time in *Palestine* says, § That all *Jews* who believ'd *Jesus* to be *Christ* were call'd *Ebionites*. A good deal more might be said on this Head, but thus far may suffice, to satisfy the ingenuous Reader, that the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, or *Mineans* were the same first *Christians*, the very Converts of *Jesus* himself and his Apostles, which I had to prove; and then as to another Point in Question, mention'd often and disputed,

* 'Tis imagin'd there was this Difference in Opinion between them: The *Ebionites* believ'd *Jesus* was the Son of *Joseph* and *Mary* by Nature, but by Adoption or Exaltation the Son of *God*. Whereas the *Nazarenes* said he was the Son of *God* by his miraculous Conception. This is the pretended Difference not certainly known, vid. *Epiphanius*. *Hær.* 29. n. 7. & 30. n. 1. 2. But because both *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites* agreed in those two main Principles, 1st, that *Jesus* was a Man only, and 2^{dly}, that the Law of *Moses* ought to be observ'd by all *Jewish Christians*, together with the Gospel, therefore they have been consider'd as one Sect. Anonym.

† *Math.* ii. 23. § *Lib.* 2. contra *Celsum* sub init. & *Philocal.* p. 17. Edit. Cant. 1568.

disputed, p. 78.—81. by the *Vindicator*, “ whether they were ever in Possession of St. Matthew’s Autography.” Of this one would think there should be no Doubt, with those who are Worshipers of written Tradition; which says, it was compos’d by the *Apostle* at their Request, and this just before he set out from *Jerusalem*, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles; * *He wrote it, says Father Eusebius, in his own Country Language, and to supply to those he left behind the Want of his Presence, therefore they must necessarily have had it in Possession, and one would think they made Use of it too, if our Author had not contested it.*

But he says, p. 79. “ that *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* are the first ecclesiastical Writers that speak of the *Nazarenes* (and *Ebionites*) using the authentic Hebrew of *Matthew*; but whose Accounts we are not hastily to give into, because those Sects themselves assign’d no such Title to their own Gospels;” which he asserts confidently of his own Head, against common Sense, and in the Teeth of *Epiphanius* and † *Jerom*, who had it from those *Christians* themselves.

But mind pray, how soon the *Vindicator* contradicts himself; he says, *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* are the first Writers, that give the Account above mention’d, and yet could not for his Life conceal, p. *ibid.* that *Irenæus*, who liv’d 200 Years before them, gives the same Account (to wit) § that the *Ebionites* made Use of *Matthew’s Gospel* only, and which our Author forgetting himself admits to have been the pure and uninterpolated Gospel of that Name; but then he fancies, “ they had another (also) with the Title of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, or twelve Apostles, “ the

* E. H. l. 3. c. 24.
Hæres. l. 3. c. 11.

† Vid. *supr.* p. 25.

§ Adv.

“ the same which *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* (by *Matth*
 “ *stake*) reported to be the authentic *Hebrew* of
 “ *Matthew*, p. 80.” Our Author, who never
 regards *Fathers* but, when they serve for his own
 Turn, pretends here to oppose his own Autho-
 rity to those two *Fathers*, in a particular Matter,
 of which himself is intirely ignorant, and with
 which they must needs have been perfectly well
 acquainted. But I would observe,

First, That the *Vindicator* no where finds the
Jewish Christians ever made Use of two Gospels, or
 that they had any other * Gospel than that of *Mat-*
thew. Nor,

2dly, Does antient History any where expressly
 inform him, that the Gospel according to the *He-*
brews, was an absolutely † distinct Gospel from that
 of *Matthew's Authenticum*, so that he is wrong
 in both. After this the *Vindicator* hath all Man-
 ner of Turns and Shifts to avoid the Charge of
Adulteration. “ He says the Principles upon
 “ which any one of the *Fathers* charge the *Na-*
 “ *zarenes* and *Ebionites* with corrupting the origi-
 “ nal *Hebrew* of *Matthew*, suppose the *Greek* of
 “ that Gospel (which themselves were in Posses-
 “ sion of) to be a faithful Transmission, p. 77.”

To

* *Epiph.* Hær. 30. n. 13. *Iren.* l. 3. c. 11. *Euseb.* E. H.
 l. 3. c. 27.

† *Epiphanius* was born and bred in *Palestine*,
 and *Jerom* travell'd purposely thither to be inform'd of the
 State of the *Nazarene Churches* and their Scriptures, in the
 midst of whom he abode many Years, and had their Gospel
 to translate; so that these two *Fathers* must necessarily have
 been acquainted with these People and their Gospel, which they
 are so far from saying was distinct from that *Matthew* wrote,
 that they both assert it to have been his very Gospel most en-
 tire, and consequently that the Gospel, then and now used by
 the Church was either supposititious or corrupt. Add to this,
 that had the Gospel to the *Hebrews*, been a distinct Apocry-
 phal Gospel, we should have found it in *Pope Gelasius's* De-
 cret.

To which it is answer'd, that the *Fathers* should not only have *suppos'd*, but they should have given the World some Satisfaction, in a Point of so great Consequence, upon what Grounds they *suppos'd* it; we have just now seen what *Epiphanus* and *Jerom* *suppos'd*, and the *Vindicator's* Reasons as to the rest are good for nothing. He would insinuate, p. 78. "As if the *Fathers* *suppos'd* their own Gospel a faithful Transcript, 1st, because it had been long receiv'd and read in their Churches, and 2dly, because of its Disagreement with the *Hebrew* Copies of the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*;" which Reasons are the most inconclusive that could be invented, as they certainly are by our Author. For first this Gospel's being read in the Christian Assemblies, could be no Proof in the first Ages of its Authenticity; because many other spurious Gospels were at the same Time read with it, and that without the least possible Mark of Distinction, the Canon not being yet settled; and 2dly, its known Disagreement with the *Hebrew* Copies of the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, who had this Gospel once pure and *un-interpolated*, is the strongest Reason possible to be assign'd, why those *Fathers* should have suspected their own Gospel to have been adulterated, knowing from whence it came.

For who should have the pure Gospel of *Matthew*, if the *Jewish Christians*, whose the Autograph was, had it not; the Gentile Churches never had any other than the *Greek* Gospel, not one of the *Fathers* ever pretending so much, as to have seen *Matthew's Hebrew*, either Original or Copy before *Jerom*; how then should they come to know, they had a true Version? Whatever Version or Copy they had, it must have come thro' the *Nazarenes* Hands, and can any Thing appear more dishonest, than for the *Fathers* to charge

charge those *Christians*, to whom they were obliged for what ever Copies they had, with making Use of corrupt Copies, and boast that themselves only had the true Ones? Tho' this indeed is but of a Piece with their other Practices.

Again, whatever Principles the Fathers went by, to judge of the faithful Transmission of their own Gospel, they were very likely (say *Heretics*) to be false; since to judge at all of the faithful Transmission of any Books, it is requisite we should know somewhat of the History, and Circumstances of their Transmission; concerning which, with respect to the Gospel in Debate, 'tis certain the Fathers were entirely in the Dark.

Should we therefore suppose this Gospel to have been corrupted (as is said) by the *Nazarenes* and *Ebionites*, how weak is it to imagine, they should first of all, even before they attempted to corrupt it, transmit a Copy or Version to the *Gentiles*, their avow'd Enemies; were the *Jews* ever known to be so communicative of their Scriptures?

But the *Vindicator* assigns a Reason, why it was not so proper for them to be so over hasty in the present Case; " This Gospel according to him, " p. 41. being immediately design'd for the Edition of believing *Jews*, and not for the " Conversion of the *Gentiles*;" to what Purpose then should they dispatch it away to the *Gentiles*, who were in a State of Infidelity? But if they delay'd the Transmission for some few Years (that is) 'till after the *Gentiles* were in some Numbers converted, possibly in the intermediate Space, it might receive those Alterations, of which ecclesiastical History informs us; consequently what *Heretics* urge, that 'tis highly improbable, the *Gentiles* should ever have come at the pure Text of *Matthew* from the *Jews*, seems to be but too well grounded.

The Matter seems to be plainly this,—The Ecclesiastics in the 3d or 4th Century coming to know, that their Gospel differ'd very much, from that of the *Jewish Christians*, they (as our Author, p. 78. observes) “judg'd from the Disagreements “between the two Gospels only, without farther “Grounds,” that these last had adulterated their Gospel, and that their own was pure; but how partial those Grounds are, hath been sufficiently expos'd.

Upon the whole *Heretics* argue, either that *Matthew's* Gospel was corrupted by the *Jewish Christians*, or it was not; if it was, nothing can be more vain than the Imagination, that those *Christians* should hasten away a true Version, or Transcript to the *Gentiles*, who sought it not, even before they had so corrupted it; which is the only Principle on which the *Fathers* founded the Verity of their own Gospel:—But if on the other hand, it shall be insisted on, agreeably to what *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* both relate, who knew this Matter better than any other, *that those Christians preserv'd the Gospel of Matthew even to the 5th Century most entire*; then, say *Heretics*, 'tis manifest from remaining Fragments, that we have got at present either a distinct Gospel, or else one very different, since they are scarce found to agree in any Particulars.

And 'tis next to a Miracle (continue they) if what is last mention'd, *viz.* that we have got an absolutely distinct Gospel, is not really the Case; considering the many forg'd *Greek Gospels* that appear'd early in the 2d Age, under the Names of the * Holy Apostles, and how easy it was for
H the

* There were extant in the first Ages one or more Gospels, under the Names of every Apostle singly, and of all the Apostles jointly; as, *v.g.* another Gospel under the Name of *Matthew* (distinct

the Gentile Fathers, to be impos'd on by one of these, taking upon itself the Name of *Matthew*, and pretending to be a Translation from his *Hebrew*; which they, ignorant as they were of the *Hebrew Tongue*, might too easily give ear to, and be deceiv'd; and this the rather, as it does not appear, they ever sent after the Original to compare the pretended Translation with, or that they made any Inquiry after the Translator, or took any one Step (for none appears in History) to satisfy themselves and succeeding *Christians*, of the Truth and Authority of such pretended Translation, (tho' from the mixt *Syro-Chaldaic* Language, known to few, and which requir'd the utmost Skill and Fidelity in the Person of the Translator to accomplish) yet under all these Disadvantages, and total Want of Evidence, and having nothing to befriend it but flying Report, with the Ignorance and Superstition of Ecclesiastics, did this Gospel thrive; and in Process of Time, make its Way into the Christian Canon, and take up the most honourable Place in it, and there it remained quiet, under the Reputation of being a *Divine Translation* from *St. Matthew's Hebrew*, till about 200 Years past, when that excellent Critic *D. Erasmus*, first dar'd to unfold the Truth, and to demonstrate, that our present Gospel is not a Translation, but a Transcript, deriv'd not from an *Hebrew* but a *Greek Original*; and since *Erasmus* many of our greatest Critics have been of the same Opinion.

Now

(distinct from that wrote by himself in *Hebrew*.) Another Gospel of *John*. The Gospel of *Peter*, of *Matthias*, of *Thomas*, of *Bartholomew*, of *Philip*, of *Jude*, of *Barnabas*, of *Andrew*, of *James*, of *Paul*, of *Judas Iscariot*, of the 12 Apostles. Vid. Catal. in *Toland's Amynt*. *Nye's* Defence against *Toland*; and *Jones's Meth.* of Sett. the Can. part i. ch. 3. and the Authorities there cited.

Now as nothing could expose more effectually the Ignorance or Knavery of the *Greek Fathers*, who should be so grossly deceiv'd, or deceive others, than this Discovery ; so in any other Case but that of Religion, where Men's Prejudices are for the most part invincible, a Discovery of this Nature (say *Infidels*) would presently determine us, against all Authority of any such Book ; we should presently conclude, that as the pretended Author is on all Hands confess'd to have been a poor, mean, simple, and illiterate *Hebrew* ; that such Person (I say) if he was capable of writing at all, must do it (as all Antiquity indeed agrees he did) in his vernacular Tongue, especially when he wrote to his own Countrymen, as mean and illiterate as himself ; but now as this *Gospel* is found to be of *Greek Original*, we should no longer believe it of such Author's Composure, who if inspir'd would have been taught better, than to write in *Greek* to illiterate *Hebrews*, and who if not inspir'd, could not compose in that learned Language.

But the *Vindicator* not a whit mov'd with such Infidel Reflections, tho' very deserving his Attention, but bearing upon the deep-rooted Prejudices of vulgar Believers, has the Assurance to assert, p. 81. " That supposing our present " Gospel to be a *Version* from *Matthew's original Hebrew*, yet as that *Hebrew* (he affirms) " was always pure, it matters not by whom the " *Greek Version* was made, nor how, nor by whom, " it was authenticated:" (Was there ever any Thing heard like this?) He goes on, — " *The Church* " *of Christ*, whose Concern it was, to see that " Work faithfully done, appears to have been " thoroughly satisfy'd, and neither *Heretics*, nor " *Gentile Unbelievers*, have objected against the " Fidelity of the Translation, nor its just and u-

“ niversal Reception.” — *Unbelievers* would be glad to know, where this *Church of Christ*, that concern’d itself so early with the Translation of *Matthew’s Hebrew* existed, and how it comes to pass, we have no Tradition from her, touching the Translator, or that the Translation was ever examin’d by the Original.

Again, supposing our *Gospel* should be found to be no *Translation*, but a *Copy*, yet in that Case our Author is not daunted, he would have us nevertheless acquiesce in it, as the very *Authenticum* of *Matthew*, upon the Account of its great Antiquity; for he says, p. 82. “ we have
 “ Reason to think, that *Matthew’s* present *Greek*
 “ Gospel, be it *Original*, or be it a *Version*, was
 “ receiv’d both in the *Eastern* and *Western Church-*
 “ *es* (he calls them) even before the Destruction
 “ of *Jerusalem*,” which you must know happen’d *Anno* 70, and which according to our Author, p. 68. was eight Years, but according to others, not above five Years after this *Gospel* is suppos’d to have been publish’d, when the Troubles in *Judæa* were actually begun, during which short Space only, and when the Eastern World breath’d nothing but War, and was all in a Flame, this Man is not asham’d to maintain, that not only the *Eastern*, but the *Western Churches* also, were planted and establish’d, in their Reception and Belief of this *Gospel*; and from which presum’d early Reception only he argues, that whether it be a *Version*, or whether it be a *Copy*, and “ tho’ we have not
 “ the precise History and Circumstances of its
 “ Verification, yet we ought to admit the *Faith-*
 “ *fulness* of the Act; ” (that is) we ought to admit its *Faithfulness*, tho’ we know nothing at all in Relation to it, and take our Author’s Word for its Antiquity.

Whereas

Whereas Antiquity cannot alter the Nature of Things, it can never make that true, which was once false. There is nothing more deceitful than the Plea of Antiquity or old Tradition, for the Proof of either Doctrines or Facts; besides our Author's *Tradition* comes not to us uninterrupted, as he would have us believe, *Heathens*, as well as *Heretics*, having broke in upon, and rejected it.

For notwithstanding the *Bishop's* and our Author's boasted Confessions of *Porphry* and *Celsus*, whose Writings are all destroyed, and of the * *Emperor Julian*, some of whose Works still remain, 'tis too plain, they never admitted the *Facts* in any of our *Gospels* farther, than to make them the Subject of their Ridicule, and the Effect of a blind Superstition; and the vulgar *Christians* they considered as a simple and deluded People; and as to *Heretics* (if the *Hebrew Christians* were such) they must needs have rejected, the *Gentile Gospel of Matthew* as spurious, because it varied infinitely from their own; and to these other Parties of *Gentile Christians* adhered, in their common Censure of this, among other

* As to the *Emperor Julian* in particular, he was a Person of a noble and most exalted Genius. When Young, he was educated in the *Christian Religion*, but when he came to be of Years, he not only renounced but exposed it, as the most detestable Cheat and Imposition upon Mankind. His Words in a Fragment preserved by *Cyril* (l. 2. p. 39. Edit. Petav.) are these, viz. *I judge it worth my While to declare to all Mortals, the Causes which induce me to believe, that the Sect of the Galileans, is a humane Contrivance, maliciously formed, having nothing in it Divine, but addicted to Fables, and imposing on the childish and foolish Part of the Mind, has had Recourse to prodigious Stories for a Proof of its Truth. What could the Emperor say more? and yet the Bishop ventures to assure his whole Diocese in Print, that Julian never affirmed there was no Foundation for the Truth of the Gospel History. Third Part. Lett. P. 17.*

other Gospels; the * *Manichees* more particularly, as we all know. But as Clergymen are bold enough at all Times, to assert any Thing before Laics, so Laics to be even with them, must believe accordingly.

Had not the *Vindicator* and his Friends presum'd very much, upon the Ignorance of their Readers, they would never have dared to affirm, that the *Greek Gospel of Matthew* was received, both in the *Eastern* and *Western Churches* before the Destruction of *Jerusalem* (that is) near sixty Years before any of the *Gospels* came to light, according to the learned † *Dodwell*, or were collected, so as to be distinguished from spurious Pieces, according to † *Dr. Mill*.

'Tis allowed *John's Gospel* was not published till the Year 97, i. e. near thirty Years after the Excision of *Jerusalem*; and 'tis evident *Luke's Gospel* was not wrote, 'till after the § Commencement of the second Age, famous for Forgeries, when those many *Apocryphal Gospels* were abroad,
to

* These *Manichees* were a great Body of *Christians* in the third Century, who (as Father *Simon* observes) sacrificed all to their Reason, and nothing to Authority; they rejected all our present Gospels as spurious, which our Party (says *Fauftus*) have often proved, as neither written by our Lord, or his Apostles, but many Things after their Decease were picked up from Stories, and flying Reports, by I know not what Set of half Jews, ill agreeing among themselves, &c. *August. cont. Faust. l. 33. c. 3.*

† *Dissert. i. in Iren. l. 38, 39.* ‡ *Prolegom. p. 23.*

§ We have no Tradition when *Luke's Gospel* was wrote. The Church supposes he wrote next after *Mark* and before *John*, only because some Fathers place his Gospel in that Order. And as we have no certain Testimony, that any one *Apocryphal Gospel*, was extant in the first Age, *Luke's Gospel* must needs have been composed some Time in the Second, after the Apostle's Decease, when 'tis known those Gospels came abroad, *vid. Euseb. E. H. l. 4. c. 22.*

That *Luke* wrote to refute false Gospels, see *Euseb. E. H. l. 3. c. 24. Aug. de consens Evang. l. 4. c. 8. Erasmus & Grot. in Luc. i. 1. Sim. Crit. Hist. N. T. part i. c. 3.* See also *Jones's Method, &c. part i. chap. 2.* and the many Authorities there by cited.

to which he refers, and to refute which, was the principal Occasion of his Writing, as is manifest from the *Proëme* of his *Gospel*, and the Consent of all *Antiquity*. And then as to *Matthew* and *Mark's Gospel*, for they are visibly (with very little Difference) the * same. This its Impugners generally conceive, to be one of those *Greek Gospels* too, which arose in the said second Age; for the Reason that it is found to be of *Greek Original*, and consequently a different *Gospel* from that, formerly in Possession of the *Jewish Christians*, wrote in *Hebrew*, and which if the Apostle wrote at all, must be his *Gospel*, either entire or corrupt. So that we see some Men, who have nothing in View, but *bare Truth*, and the fierce Resentment of those, whose *Vengeance never sleeps*, are so far from agreeing with the *Vindicator*, that both the *Eastern* and the *Western World*, had received *Matthew's*, or any, other *Gospel* before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, that they are verily † persuaded, there is not a single *Gospel* in our Canon, that appeared till long after.

Nor is it of any Consequence what the *Vindicator* urges further, p. 89. as a strong Proof, “ that the *Greek Copies* of *Matthew* must needs “ have been spread, in the extreme Parts of “ the *Roman Empire*, in the first Age;” because he finds, or thinks he finds, Citations out of it, in the Epistles of *Barnabas* and *Clemens Romanus*
now

* *Marcus Matthæum subsequutus tanquam pedisequus & brevior ejus videtur.* Aug. *ibid.* l. i. p. 3. *Erasm.* in *Luc.* i. 1. *Grot.* *ibid.* & in *Marc.* i. *Sixtus Senens,* *Bibl. Sanct.* l. i. p. 17. *Spanheim.* *Hist. Eccl. Secul.* i. p. 543. cum multis aliis.

† *N. B.* If any of the Books of the *N. T.* had been wrote before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, *Barnabas*, *Hermas* and others, who are suppos'd to have wrote a little after, would in all Probability have cited some of 'em, which 'tis certain they do not. *Anonym.*

now extant; for as we know nothing certain of those Apocryphal, and supposititious Pieces, in what Age, or by whom they were ushered into the World; so Dr. *Mill* and Mr. *Dodwell* particularly observe of those Epistles, * “ that they
 “ call not *Matthew* nor any other of the *Evan-*
 “ *gelists* by their own Names, and if sometimes
 “ the Authors cite any Passages, like those we
 “ read in our *Gospels*, yet (says he) you will find
 “ them so much changed, and for the most Part
 “ so interpolated, that it cannot be known, whe-
 “ ther they produced them out of ours, or some
 “ *Apocryphal Gospels*, nay, they sometimes cite
 “ Passages, which it is certain, are not in the
 “ present *Gospels*.” So that these Epistles we
 see, like all the rest of our Author’s Evidence,
 after a little Examination, comes to nothing.

Having just now had Occasion, to speak to the Times when St. *Luke’s* and St. *John’s Gospels* were probably composed, it puts me in mind of a Cavil or two of the *Vindicator’s*, in reference to both those *Gospels*. That to St. *Luke’s* is this.

The *Inquirer* had noted in his Margin, p. 22. from the Observation of an *Anonymous* Author,
 “ That *Luke* cannot be understood, to have
 “ composed his *Gospel*, from *Paul’s* Preaching,
 “ as the Fathers generally assert, since *Luke*
 “ himself tells us in his Preface, *That he wrote*
 “ *what he received from those, who from the Beginning*
 “ *were Eye-Witnesses of the Word*, which *Paul* ’tis
 “ known was not.” To this the *Vindicator*, p. 19.
 answers, “ That *Anonymous* is certainly mistaken,
 “ for *Luke* does not say, he compiled his *Gospel*
 “ from the Information of those, who had been
 “ Eye-Witnesses from the Beginning; it is of
 “ those who had wrote before him that he af-
 “ firms

* *Dissertat. i. in Iren. c. 38, 39. Prolegom. c. 144.*

“ firms this,” I confess, tho’ this Gentleman’s Construction is very right as to Fact, and that *Luke* wrote too late to receive Instructions from those, who were immediate Witnesses of the Things he relates, yet he is certainly wrong, with respect to the Construction Commentators put on *Luke’s* Words; who for the most part approve of that, which *Anonymus* gives of them. They have not dared to understand, as our Author, that *Luke* compiled his *Gospel* from the Information of those, who wrote before him, who had their Information at second Hand, and whose *Gospels*, say Commentators, he intimates to have been imperfect, or else there had been no further Occasion for his Writing. But however this be, *Luke* can never in any Sense be wrested to mean, he had his Information from *Paul*, as the Fathers have falsely, and most impertinently reported.

Then as to *St. John’s Gospel*, his Cavil is this. The *Inquirer* having said, “ that all know his *Gospel* was very near his own Time ascribed to another Person ;” the *Vindicator* presently answers, p. 16. “ That indeed we all know the *Alogi* mentioned by *Epiphanius*, Hær. 51. were absurd enough to ascribe *St. John’s Gospel* to *Cerintbus*, tho’ plainly and principally levelled against *Cerintbianism*: But that these *Alogi* lived very near *St. John’s* Time, no Man at all conversant in Antiquity will pretend to say.”

But as confident as the *Vindicator* is on these Heads, I doubt not but to satisfy the reasonable World; first, that the *Alogi* were no other, than the first *Gentile Converts*; and secondly, that they were not absurd, in attributing *St. John’s Gospel* to *Cerintbus*. And,

First, that the *Alogi* were the *first Gentile Convertis* is in a manner prov'd by their Appellation ; they were called *Alogi*, for that they from the Beginning deny'd the Platonic *Logos*, of which the Proeme to this *Gospel* speaks ; and believ'd concerning *Jesus*, the very same with their Brethren the *Nazarenes*, and as all the first *Christians* did ; they were Disciples of the *Apostles* before *Justin M.* or any the unhappy *Platonists* (those Corrupters of genuine Christianity) came into the Church. *Epiphanius* all along speaks of these *Alogi*, as the antient *Unitarians* of the Gentiles ; indeed they were not so properly a Sect, as the prevailing, or orthodox, and only, Party of *Gentile Christians* of the first Age, who with the *Jewish*, had no Notion of the Pre-existence of *Jesus*, and for this I appeal to * *Epiphanius*, who treats of them, as prior in Time to *Theodotus*, the famous *Unitarian*, who flourish'd in the 2d Century, and who join'd himself to them.

Secondly, that *St. John's Proeme*, was not levelled against *Cerinthus*, nor the *Alogi* absurd in ascribing it to him, is most evident ; for tho' *Cerinthus* was a *Nazarene*, and believ'd as they did, that *Jesus* was a mere Man born of *Joseph* and *Mary*, yet he taught withal, that their rested on, or inhabited in, his Person (*i. e.* from his Baptism to his Crucifixion) the *Logos*, or divine Word ; which he called the *Christ*, by which he plainly intended, that divine Virtue or Power, by which *God* created the World ; so that the Doctrine in *St. John's Proeme*, and that of this *Heretic* concerning the *Logos*, were the very same, consequently the said *Proeme* could not be levell'd against him.

And

And as to rest of this *Gospel*, they that are conversant in *Polemic Divinity* know, that the *Socinians* excerpt more Evidence from it, to prove *Christ* a mere Man, than from all the other three *Gospels*, which shews farther, that no Part of this *Gospel* was pointed against *Cerintbus*; and therefore that all the *Vindicator* hath said on these Heads, serves only to expose his own little Acquaintance with this Controversy, and not any Absurdity in the innocent *Alogi*.

I may I think fairly conclude here, having gone thro' with, and sufficiently expos'd, the Evasions, the Sophistry, the false Reasoning, and the spurious Evidence, with which the *Vindicator* and his *Assistants* have pursu'd their Subject, and endeavour'd to support the *Gospel* in Debate against *Heretics* and *Unbelievers*. We must acknowledge therefore the said *Gospel*, either to have been very ill vindicated, or else to be an *Apocryphal Gospel*; indeed nothing can tend to harden *Infidels* more in their Disbelief of it, than the mean Artifices made Use of for its Verification.

As *Truth* never will endure to be supported by *Error*, so tho' it may be oppress'd for a while, yet it seldom or never happens, but that in Process of Time, it rears up its Head again, and triumphs over its Adversaries. Whereas this *Gospel* (say its Impugners) hath from the very Beginning stood condemned, and never could get over those Testimonies, which have been brought against it. It hath been condemned say they by those very *Christians*, whom we allow to have been the *Depositaries* of its Original, and consequently to be the best, if not the only Judges, of whatever should claim to descend from it. To which Judgment of theirs, alas! what have we to oppose, who have neither written, nor oral Tradition, of the Manner of our coming by it, or
that

that it was ever compar'd with the Original. And considering what exceeding great Lyars the *Jews* were, their Aversion to the *Gentiles*, and their grudging tenacious Temper with respect to their Scriptures, many conceive it next to impossible, we should ever have procur'd the pure Text of *Matthew* from them.

However this is a Difficulty, worthy our *Diocesan's* Learning and indefatigable Industry to help us over, and we hope he will think it his *incumbent Duty* so to do, especially in a Matter of so great Importance; for tho' Difficulties, it must be confess'd, cannot alter the Nature of Things, as our wise Author, from a wiser Doctor observes, p. 3. yet in our Apprehensions they may, which is much the same; and 'tis to such like Difficulties, his Lordship may know, that all the Scepticism and Deism, which even at this Time make intolerable Ravage in his Diocese, are entirely owing.

Considering therefore the great Pains his Lordship hath taken, to shew us in his second pastoral Letter, * “the Insufficiency of Reason in this
“ corrupt State, to be our Guide in Matters of
“ Religion, it may well be expected,” (his Lordship is pleas'd to say) “that he should shew
“ us what is a sufficient Guide, and where the
“ Directions are to be found, which will ac-
“ quaint us with the Way of Salvation, and up-
“ on which we may surely depend: And this (his
“ Lordship is pleas'd to allow) can no otherwise
“ be effectually done, than by making good his
“ own following Positions;” to which *Heretics*
and *Infidels* also willingly subscribe, viz.

“ First, that the four Gospels contain a faith-
“ ful and true Account of the Birth, Life,
“ Death, Resurrection and Ascension of *Jesus*. ”
And,

* 3d Past. Lett. p. 8.

And, “ 2dly, that they have been faithfully trans-
“ mitted down to us.”

Before I put an end to this Discourse, I would say a Word or two to the Author of a *Letter to a Lady* on the foregoing Subject. He pretends to have wrote his *long Scroll* (as he calls it) by the Command, and under the Direction of an old Lady, perhaps his good old Mother the Church ; for he writes all along in due filial Obedience to her, and with her *termagant Spirit* ; he tells her she need not be in Pain, for her Grandson understands the Languages of the antient Authors he cites.

This mercenary Scribler takes great Pains to merit Preferment at his Mother's Hands, for railing heartily at the *Inquirer* (whom he most uncharitably considers as an irreclaimable *Heretic*) and for bestowing high Commendations on the *third Pastoral Letter*. “ He calls it a compleat
“ Performance, wherein the Evidence, that the
“ four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account
“ (of *Jesus*) is set in a clear and beautiful Light,
“ p. 16. tho' (he thinks nevertheless) not in a full
“ distinct and clear View,” which he pretends the
“ Pastoral Author never said he would do,” p. 5.
He spends at least three Parts of his Scribble, in Language the most vile and abusive, that impotent sacerdotal Malice could invent, or else in little Cavils and Criticisms, beneath a Man of Sense, and which arise (many of them) from his own Ignorance and Mistakes. For instance, p. 10. where he accuses the *Inquirer* ignorantly, for misrepresenting *St. Paul* in 2 *Cor.* xi. 6. tho' he comments in the very *Words* of the ablest * Critic and Divine

* *St. Paul* (says *M. Le Clerc*) though born in a Town that spoke nothing but *Greek*, had so corrupted his Speech,
by

vine of the present Age, and in the *Sense* of the greatest Doctors the Church ever had, who have acknowledged *Paul's* Unskilfulness in the *Greek*. P. 13. he has the Face to deny, the *Fathers* were the *Modellers* of the *Christian Religion*; and p. 17. he appears so little read in Church History, as not to know, that *St. John* wrote his *Gospel* to supply the Defects in the other three, and more particularly with respect to those most necessary and essential Articles of *Jesus's* Divinity and Incarnation, which they had omitted. Again, p. 24. he draws a Parallel which immediately infers our Saviour to have been a very Rebel, as having set himself up for *King of Judæa*, and consequently to have been justly condemn'd on that Account. He insinuates, p. 35. that *Celsus*, *Porphry*, and the Emperor *Julian* knew the *Gospels* were compil'd by those whose Names they bare; tho' *Christians* could not agree in this Matter among themselves, and tho' the Philosopher *Celsus* (who 'tis suppos'd flourish'd about *Trajan's* Time) * accuses *Christians* so early with altering their *Gospels* every Turn, and consequently framing new ones, as they saw occasion. This *Letter-Writer* has the Assurance, p. 28, 29. to deny *Christians* ever destroy'd the Heathen, or suppress'd or alter'd one another's Writings, as having never heard of Imperial Edicts, or Decrees of Councils for that Purpose, or that Priests themselves have confess'd the Fact, and accus'd one another for the same Crime. He is willing to perswade, p. 40. that the *Evangelists* were not mean and illiterate, contrary to all Church Testi-

by long dwelling in *Judæa*, that he confesses *he was ignorant in the Language*, 2 Cor. xi. 6. as sufficiently appears by all his Epistles, and therefore the *Greek* Fathers have complain'd of the Obscurity of his Stile, and barbarous Phrases therein, &c. 2d Lett. Insp.

* Origin. contr. Celsum, l. ii.

Testimony *, or that our *Diocesan* ever intended to cast such an injurious Reflection on them. But I have neither Time, nor Space here, to remark farther. If this Gentleman hath any *Argument*, he will find it not neglected, in one or other Part of this Treatise. But why do I name *Argument*, when such as are of his Spirit have so little to do with it? Their Business (now Fire and Faggot are no more in their Power) is to discourage all Examination into Religion, by misrepresenting the State of the Question, — puzzling the Cause, — belying *Heatbens* and *Heretics*, — perverting the Fathers and Scripture when against them, and — discrediting all they can the Persons of their Adversaries; in this, and concealing the most weighty Objections of those who differ from them, lyes the whole Merit generally, of their controversial Performances. But as Learning increaseth, these Artifices will stand no longer in stead; and the Time I hope, is very near approaching, in this happy Kingdom of Liberty, *when Truth shall triumph over Authority, and Reason shall be no more decry'd, and God blasphem'd.*

* This the *Mahometans* admire of their *Prophet*, viz. that tho' rude and illiterate, he was nevertheless capable of composing so elegant a Work, as that of the Alcoran is confess'd to be; at the same Time that *Christians* have constantly flung in their Teeth *Mahomet's* Ignorance, as might be prov'd in a thousand Instances: I will only mention *Dean Prideaux*, who calls him *an illiterate Barbarian, that could neither write nor read; a rude and illiterate Barbarian, who could not compile his Book without Assistance*; even as we are taught to conceive of our Evangelists, that they could not relate, even the Facts they had been privy to, without divine Assistance. *Prid. Life of Mahomet*, p. 32, 34. Edit. 6.

F I N I S.

